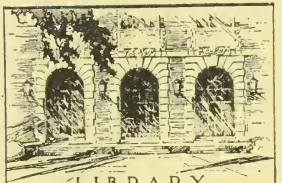

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THE

MUNSTER COTTAGE BOY.

A Tale.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

REGINA MARIA ROCHE,

AUTHOR OF

THE CHILDREN OF THE ABBEY, TRECOTHICK BOWER, MONASTERY OF ST. COLUMB, &c. &c.

And yet poor Edwin was no vulgar boy. BEATTIE.

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THE

MUNSTER COTTAGE BOY.

CHAPTER I.

" The world has now no joy for me,
Nor can life now one pleasure boast,
Since all my eyes desir'd to see,
My wish, my hope, my all, is lost!

" Since she, so form'd to please and bless—
So wise, so innocent, so fair!
Whose converse sweet made sorrow less,
And brighten'd all the gloom of care—

" Since she is lost, ye Powers divine,
What have I done, or thought, or said—
Oh say, what horrid act of mine
Has drawn this vengeance on my head?"

CONSCIOUS of the fluctuating sentiments with which she was now regarded by Mrs. Stovendale, Fidelia no longer felt

herself at ease with her; and the disquietude she experienced from the above conviction was heightened by her dread of the stranger's departing without finishing his narrative, and thus leaving her in a state of still greater unhappiness than ever, from the hope she had indulged of receiving some information from him concerning her birth. Both from the particulars he had already given her, and an expression that appeared inadvertently to have dropped from him, she was inclined to believe he was not, as she had at first surmised, Dullany, and consequently was uncertain whether his being where he now was might not be a mere casual circumstance. One thing, however, she had ascertained from what she had already heard, namely, that it was through his misfortunes lady Castle Dermot had to lament the fate of her sister being so disastrous, having previously ascertained her being the daughter of lord Mountrath: yet why, attached to her as she appeared to have been, she had not tried to soften

and alleviate that fate, was a matter of wonder to her; she concluded, however, this, amongst other matters, would be explained in the course of the narrative, if indeed the remainder of it should be given. But, exclusive of her anxiety for this on account of herself and others, she wished it finished, from the interest the strong and almost indescribable interest the narrator himself had inspired: his air, his look, his voice—all captivated her attention and impressed themselves on her imagination; and to shield, to save him from harm, she felt she could willingly risk her own safety.

As she was sitting at night disconsolately in her chamber, she heard footsteps outside the window, and immediately after, some one pausing under it. With a hope and belief of its being him, she hastened to it, and gently raising the sash, found she was not wrong in her conjecture. In a low voice he briefly stated that he had for some time been watching,

from a hope of obtaining what had now occurred, namely, an opportunity of informing her that, as he was called away by imperious circumstances to another part of the kingdom, except she could admit him to a conference the ensuing day, it would not be in his power to give her the further particulars she was anxious to hear.—Alarmed at the idea of a disappointment, Fidelia immediately consented; and the hour being settled, he cautiously retired. But not without trepidation and dread did she accede to the measure requisite for the gratification of the anxiety he had alluded to; nothing less powerful than the motive that propelled her to it could have induced her again to place herself in an embarrassing predicament, after what had so recently occurred from the circumstance. But, for the sake of being enlightened on the subject of her birth, of learning whether she was or not an unconnected isolated being, there was scarcely any risk she would not have ventured to run.

Not without a dread of being recalled or invited to bring down her work, did she rise to retire from the sitting-room after breakfast. The agitation she was in was not lessened, when she had admitted her expected visitor; she paused—she hesitated, and was at length, after mentioning the terror she was in of a surprise, on the point of proposing that their conference should, if possible, be postponed to a safer hour, when he quieted all apprehension on the subject, by intimating the ease with which he could retire into a closet adjoining the room they were repairing to, in case they heard any one approaching; for, after what had occurred the preceding day, Fidelia did not dare to take the precaution of guarding against intrusion by securing the door of communication with the other tower. Every thing being arranged, he thus resumed his narrative:—

"Full of hope and ecstacy," he said, "I informed you I was hastening to the chamber of my beloved, when I stumbled

over something; immediately I stepped aside to see what it was, and, by the dim light admitted through the door by which I had entered, discovered a coffin. Ah! well may your cheek turn pale at the conception of what I endured at that horrid moment! In an instant I seemed as if turned to stone; I forgot that the pause of a minute might be fatal to me—that the bloodhounds of death and destruction were at my heels—that I was a proscribed and sentenced wretch, one who could no longer claim a right to crawl upon the surface of the earth; I only knew, I only felt that I had lost all that had attached, had connected me to life. What followed I cannot attempt to describe, as I gazed upon the inanimate form of my wife, as I kissed her closed eyes, the fair cold bosom so lately warm with life and love: but that bosom could no longer feel a pang, and there was consolation in the thought.—'But oh, flower of beauty and of fragrance!' I exclaimed, 'but for me, a wretch from my birth, thou mightest

still have been flourishing within thy native bower, in all thy native loveliness!'

"My senses wandered, and, for several weeks after, all was a blank; again then, through the unceasing attention of my fostersister Caty, then a married woman, and her husband, I was restored to a sense of existence and of wretchedness, as by their vigilance I was preserved from the pursuit made after me; the apathy of despair had pervaded my soul, and long was it ere their representations of the danger that attended my remaining where I was could rouse me to any exertion to avoid it; at last their efforts succeeded, and I consented to exile myself, with some other persecuted beings like myself, to America. How I effected my escape I cannot particularize, so regardless was I of the methods contrived for it by the humble friends that interested themselves for me. The anguish of leaving the place, as I conceived, for ever, to which habit, custom, nature had attached me, was aggra-

vated by other circumstances—such, however, as, while they heightened the grief I then experienced, stimulated me to exertions elsewhere that had a salutary effect.

"At the expiration of five years I was joined by Caty's husband and son, and, at the end of a few more, by Caty herself, and found, by tidings she brought me, that I had deceived myself when I thought I had no more to suffer. By this time, however, solitude and reflection had enabled me sufficiently to subdue the natural impetuosity of my feelings to prevent that outrageous despair that would have militated against any further exertion; whilst life was spared, reason convinced me, it was my duty to struggle with my fate, and I accordingly determined, by patiently acquiescing under affliction, not to deprive myself of the hope of that recompence promised for it hereafter. But, oh, my God! while I resolved to meekly bend my head to thy decrees, how chilling the desolation of my soul at the idea of

having no further tie to connect me with life!—for on earth can there be a greater wretch than an unconnected being?

"Could the enchantment of the eye or ear alone have gladdened the heart, mine would often have glowed with rapture; but, unconnected as were the stupendous scenes around me with aught that was ever interesting to my feelings, their contemplation often only filled me with sadness and despair; if ever they had power to charm or delight me, it was only when my anguished heart was relieved by devotion; then, in these moments of melancholy composure, of renewed resignation and holy hope, I could, with something like a sensation of pleasure, listen to the liquid melody of the mocking-bird, inhale the balsamic sweetness of the shrubs, and gaze with admiration on the dread magnificence of woods coeval with creation.

"Of the beauties that surrounded my home, no description, however florid, could give an adequate idea. A few straggling

buildings, roughly constructed, and scattered along the Ohio, constituted the village near which it stood; groves of lofty trees, and shrubberies glowing with a thousand rivalling dyes, detached and screened the houses from each other; my rude abode, an old decayed loghouse, was shadowed and enclosed, on every side but one open to the river, by woods gradually receding into forests of interminable depth, and skirted by shrubberies diversified by the splendid hues of the magnalia, the arbutus, and of a countless variety of other plants, whilst innumerable creepers entwined the trees, and the rich luxuriance of the soil was displayed in a profusion of the richest flowers, spreading such a carpet of glowing tints to the eye as art would in vain strive to equal—the rose blushing amidst its foliage, the violet lurking in the shade, the honey-locust, the passion-flower, and geranium, with an endless variety of others, here intermingled their beauties and their fragrance. Attracted by them, the humming-bird in ecstatic delight flut-

ters from blossom to blossom, like a blossom itself, wafted about by the air: on the sinking of the sun other sounds succeed; the mocking-bird then begins to pour its imitative notes of thrilling melody upon the ear; while, as darkness deepens, a thousand luminous exhalations rise from the horizon, and myriads of fireflies gleam on the foliage and twinkle in the air, as if showers of etherial sparks were falling.

"But, to all this, how often was I lost in the ideal contemplation of far different scenes—bleak and dismal when compared with these, but still interesting to every feeling of the heart, from the recollections connected with them! Oh! how fondly, how continually did my thoughts revert to them—the dark-brown heath—the mountains shrouded in mist—the narrow vales, with their cold blue streams winding along them—the rifted rocks, lashed by the waves destined to waft me to another shore!

"That I should ever have seen my native coast again I had not an idea, when

circumstances were revealed that induced me to decide on braving the danger that must attend a return to it. Your nurse had previously interested me in your fate, and at the moment of embarking, I solemnly vowed never to revisit America without ascertaining it. Instinctively, on landing, my steps first led me to the delightful shades of Woodlands, amidst which I had so often enjoyed the smiles and converse of my Julia; there I first beheld you, and there contrived to make you acquainted with the imposition that had been practised on Mr. Dundonald respecting you. How she could have attempted to practise one of the kind, I see you are on the point of inquiring; but, for the present at least, you must be content to remain in ignorance of all but her strong anxiety for your accompanying me to America, if unhappy here. To apprise you of the asylum you would find there, and obtain a sufficient portion of your confidence to prevent your feeling any reluctance to putting yourself under my

protection, has been the object of my narrative: yet, while I assure you of finding in it unceasing love and kindness, I strongly advise you against migrating from your native clime, if in it you behold any prospect of permanent felicity; for, alas! too well, from sad experience, do I know what it is to tear ourselves away from the scenes of early attachment and interest. In giving this advice, I give it against my wishes: but there are some cases in which we cannot help being selfish."

He paused, and by a look of earnestness seemed anxiously awaiting her answer: but this Fidelia could not immediately give; far from beholding any prospect of happiness, never had her future destiny seemed to her more vague or uncertain; yet still her heart died within her at the thought of quitting her native country, of banishing herself from all that had hitherto interested her; yet bitterly, she reflected, she might yet rue a positive rejection of the present offer.—"Oh! if I might but be allowed to ponder it a little!" she

said, with folded hands and a look of supplication—" a step that cannot be recalled requires some little consideration."

For that she would have sufficient time, her companion replied, the circumstances that required his presence immediately in another part of the kingdom being such as would prevent his departure from it for some time, during which she could seriously deliberate on the proposition; and he would take especial care to let her have an opportunity of making known her decision to him.

" In what way?" Fidelia could not help demanding; but he evaded the inquiry, and, though evidently with reluctance, rose to bid farewell. But Fidelia detained him—Oh! where, where was the information she had expected to receive from him —the insight into her birth, the particulars of those she belonged to? She grasped his arm in agony, conjuring him not to let her remain in the state of ignorance and suspense from which she had so confidently trusted she should be relieved by him.

Ere he could reply to this earnest address, approaching steps were heard. Immediately he disengaged himself from the trembling grasp of Fidelia, and reminding her of her promised secrecy respecting him to every being, retreated into the adjoining closet.

It was Mr. Stovendale who was approaching; he came to look over some books which Mrs. Stovendale had lent Fidelia. She was but a bad dissembler; the violent emotion she was in as he entered was but too apparent, and naturally excited both surprise and curiosity. He inquired whether any thing had happened to disturb her?—She faintly replied in the negative, affecting, as she spoke, to be looking for the books he inquired for; these, however, she could not find amongst those that were lying on the table, and suddenly recollected, to her inexpressible confusion, having deposited them on a shelf in the closet. What a dilemma!—How could she refuse to enter it for them? and yet, how could she dare, aware as she

was of the unhappy consequences that might result from doing so? Involuntarily, however, on being obliged to confess the books were within it, she advanced towards the door; but, though her hand rested on the lock, she did not make an effort to open it.

Astonished at her manner, or rather persuaded by it there was something wrong, Mr. Stovendale suddenly put his hand against the door, and ere she had power to prevent him, if indeed she would have ventured to do so, pushed it open. In inexpressible dismay she was shrinking back, when, to her equal joy and relief, she found the prisoner flown: the window was low, and through this he had effected his escape.

The immediate change in her countenance, united to the circumstance of the sash being raised, at once convinced Mr. Stovendale of the truth, namely, that she had had some one concealed here, and of whose being Grandison he had not a doubt. With a look of mingled anger and con-

tempt he directly retreated, and immediately disclosed to Mrs. Stovendale the circumstance, bitterly reproaching her for having allowed herself to be encumbered with a stranger at such a time—"It might easily have been foreseen," he exclaimed, with the asperity to which he was now but too much in the habit of yielding, "the torment that would accrue from taking a giddy headstrong young girl under our care. Good God! it maddens me to think that, through her means, a discovery may take place that, of all others, I wish to prevent. What a triumph for the proud, the unfeeling, the implacable Fitzossory, to find me so fallen!—and yet what more likely, encouraged and concealed as is his libertine heir here? But, by earth! by heaven! I will not survive any thing so humiliating to my feelings!" striding across the room as he spoke, with the look of a maniac; "I advise you therefore, madam, to do something in time to prevent it."

Mrs. Stovendale could not restrain her

tears.—"Oh, why, why," she cried, "am I reproached for having acted as feeling and principle propelled? You yourself have allowed this unhappy girl had claims upon me. Think not, however, I will allow any consideration for her to come in competition with what I owe you. On every account, I see the expediency of her quitting this; both to prevent what you dread, and to save her from ruin, 'tis absolutely requisite."

Her ready acquiescence in his wishes soothed the irritated mind of her husband, and occasioned a renewal of all that grief and repentance he ever felt, when conscious of unkindness to the faithful friend and partner of so many years of long-suffering. It was settled between them that she should that very night return by the boat with Fidelia for Dublin, for the purpose of sending her thence to England, to the temporary care of a person in the vicinity of the metropolis, till she could obtain her other and more permanent protection.

From the manner in which Mr. Stoven-

dale had left her, Fidelia anticipated something very unpleasant from the circumstance above related, but that she should be hurried away in such a manner from E—— she had not an idea; consequently, when Mrs. Stovendale acquainted her with her intention, her surprise was unutterable. But this was not all she felt; her very soul was shocked by the cold, the supercilious manner in which Mrs. Stovendale addressed her, so indicative of displeasure and contempt, and she was besides agonized at the thought of quitting the place without an opportunity of apprising her mysterious friend of the circumstance, and thus retaining a hope of further communication with him. But, could the measure have possibly been still more unwelcome to her, still would the persuasion to which she imputed it have prevented a remonstrance against it; to a conviction of her giving improper encouragement to Grandison she was certain it was owing, and unable as she was to acquit herself of this suspicion, she shrunk from hinting

her unwillingness to it; besides, entirely dependent as she was, pride no more than delicacy would permit her to solicit a longer continuance where she was—a lengthened intrusion on kindness that might already think she had encroached too long on it. Yet not without bitter tears did she think of being repelled from hearts that she had hoped had been opened to receive and cherish her, or to have a solitary home to seek again, or else one unwarmed by any feeling of social charity for her.

When a little recovered from the effect of Mrs. Stovendale's disclosure, she ventured to inquire whither she was about being sent, for the secret purpose of informing the stranger, should chance favour her again with an opportunity of speaking to him ere her departure. But the required information Mrs. Stovendale declined giving, from an unjust suspicion of her motive for desiring it, contenting herself with saying that she hoped her conduct to her since their introduction to each

other had been such that she could not fear her not placing her in a proper situation.

"Assuredly," gratefully and warmly replied Fidelia, "I have every confidence that is possible in you, dearest madam; but if, as a proof of it, I cease to press the request I have just made, may I not still, now that I understand a separation is approaching, press to know to what previous knowledge or interest the kindness to which I am so indebted has been owing?"

Mrs. Stovendale coldly replied, that as yet it was not in her power to gratify her on that head; and then telling her the sooner she commenced preparations for her departure the better, immediately left her.

"Still, still then," said the agitated Fidelia, clasping her fair hands together, "must I remain the child of mystery as well as sorrow. Oh, life! well mayest thou be styled a pilgrimage, from what I have experienced of thee!" Oh! would the pe-

riod ever arrive, in which, while on the surface of the globe, a place of rest would be hers, with the security and comforts of independence? But the Being that had upheld her through so many dangers still watched over her, and on Him, the hope, the anchor of the wretched, she placed her dependence.

Drying her fast-falling tears, she set about her preparations; but often were these interrupted by mournful thoughts and renewed agitation: her heart clung, she knew not why, to the old walls she was about quitting; these walls, she was but too well aware, Grandison still hovered about, in expectation of seeing her—but he would see her no more: a tear fell at the thought. Oh! why should it occasion one, traduced as he had been to her?—But in vain had he been maligned—her heart involuntarily repelled the scandal, and did that justice to him in secret which she dared not openly. If she acquitted him of baseness, to what motive then was she to impute his so persevering, seeking

her? Ah! how did her pulse flutter at the reply!—and to the sudden thrill of glowing transport what a deathlike chill succeeded, at the thought that her enforced avoidance of him might perhaps have prevented her being then one of the most enviable of her sex! But scarcely had the thought occurred ere she shrunk from it, as one too full of vanity to be dwelt on—yes, to some less flattering motive was owing his seeking her, but certainly, most certainly, not to one unworthy of either.

Gladly would she have avoided encountering the severe and indignant glances of Mr. Stovendale again, but as there was no pretext for this, she was compelled to endure them. Open rebuke she would have preferred to the supercilious manner in which he now treated her—a manner that rendered but too clear what was passing in his mind. And must she for ever be the victim of embarrassing circumstances? she wondered. Ingenuous in her nature, alike incapable and abhorrent of decep-

tion, how was she grieved to think that, through one means or other, she was still placed in predicaments that rendered an air of mystery unavoidable, and thus continually exposed her to strictures and misconceptions revolting to every feeling!—But to suffer seemed to be her lot, and she tried to resign herself to what seemed inevitable.

The striking of the midnight hour was the signal for departing; as Fidelia rose to obey it, the feelings of Mr. Stovendale became a little softened, and involuntarily extending his hand, he bade God bless her. Not unaffected was Fidelia by this returning kindness; as she attempted to thank him for all she had received from him, her voice faltered, and tears gushed from her. Dark and dismal was the hour—a few dull stars alone twinkled in the firmament. They stood some time on the cold bleak bank of the canal ere the arrival of the boat; at length the splashing of the water announced its approach, and presently after they beheld the gleaming of

the lights within it on the dark surface. A few minutes sufficed to place them within it, and the next morning they arrived in safety at their destination.

CHAPTER II.

" He after honour hunts—I after love;
He leaves his friends, to dignify them more—
I leave myself, my friends, and all, for love."

THROUGH the spies he had upon every movement of the inmates of the Castle, Walter was early apprised, the next day, of the departure of Fidelia, and lost no time in communicating the same to Grandison, with a hope of its being the means of his quitting a neighbourhood he had so many reasons for being anxious to get him from. The rage of Grandison at his information was unutterable, heightened as it was by the positive assurance of her being

sent out of the way entirely on his account. But the stratagem, he was determined, should not avail. As soon as able to collect himself a little, he decided on seeing Mr. Stovendale, and not quitting him till he had extorted a confession from him of the place to which she was removed, that thus he might be enabled to make an effort to rescue her from her present situation. This intention, however, he did not avow to his companion, whose arguments relative to her had latterly become extremely tiresome to him: in pursuance of it, he went out by himself, and hastening to the Castle, demanded to see Mr. Stovendale.

According to the instructions she had received, if any stranger inquired for him, the servant who answered the door denied his being at home; but her manner so clearly betrayed her uttering a falsehood, that Grandison unhesitatingly accused her of it, with a declaration that he would not quit that spot till he had seen her master. The altercation that ensued reached the

ears of Stovendale: cautiously opening the door of the apartment where he was seated to listen, he soon ascertained, from what he overheard, the name of the person thus intent on seeing him. Propelled by feelings he could not control, he immediately stepped forward—those savage feelings of indignation that had so studiously been excited in his mind against his first-born, by the cruel deception that had been practised on him; but when he actually beheld him—the son of his sainted Eva, the being whom her last faltering accents blessed—what a revulsion did they not experience!—anger, resentment, indignation—all gave way to the workings of nature; and, but for the suggestions of pride, he probably would have betrayed himself: shrinking from the idea of this, he contented himself with merely gazing, while, pale and trembling with emotion, he caught at a banister for support.

Grandison did not immediately perceive him, but when he did, hastily passing the

servant—" Mr. Stovendale, I presume?" he said.

Stovendale slightly bowed.

" My business with you is brief, sir," pursued Grandison, yet not without a little softening of the haughty and arrogant manner in which he had at first addressed him, so very different in expression of countenance and elegance of air did he find him, from the kind of being he had, through various circumstances, pictured him to his imagination ; " I merely come to obtain the address of Miss Hawthorn, for learning which I have the most urgent motive."

" No doubt, sir," answered Stovendale, recovering from his recent emotion, and gradually relapsing into all those angry feelings that had so long pervaded his soul against him ; " but as I have an equally powerful one for concealing it, you must excuse my giving the desired information."

" No, by Heaven!" exclaimed Grandison, kindling into fury at the sneer with

which this was uttered—" I demand, I insist upon obtaining what I require."

" And for this urgency could you explain the motive?"

" Could I!—yes, with readiness."

" Indeed!—well, you surprise me not a little. I will not, however, put your candour to so painful a test. Here you will not obtain what you wish; you must excuse, therefore, any longer conference on the subject, especially as I am now particularly engaged."

" Hold, sir!" cried Grandison, striding forward, and interposing between him and the door he was about entering; " we part not so hastily. If you wish not to confirm all I previously thought, you will not deny me the information I solicit."

" Where our own surmises are unfavourable, we care little about those that are formed of us. Retire, sir, and learn that the person you are now addressing has not been accustomed to the voice of insolence or pampered prosperity."

The barrier on each side was now broken,

and all was invective and reproach. Imputing to the most unworthy motives his denying him the information he solicited, Grandison had no hesitation in uttering what he thought; and forgetting that the accusation was made in utter ignorance of the connexion between them, Stovendale could no longer control the fury of his soul—all that had been engendered there against his first-born now burst forth in terms of the bitterest reproach—the imagined injuries of another he made a pretext for resenting his own equally imagined ones—in a word, he said every thing that passion could dictate, every thing that he thought could work upon the haughty feelings of the other (a horrible idea having suggested itself to him, namely, that of provoking his son to a measure that might eventually render him the instrument of ridding him of an existence no longer supportable, and of entailing at the same time upon himself everlasting remorse, such as he conceived he ought to feel); beyond endurance he goaded the

feelings of Grandison, and, even if his patience as a man could have allowed him to bear his railings unprovoked, the honour of a soldier would not permit it. When, therefore, Stovendale followed up his taunts by sneeringly telling him there was a way in which he could obtain redress for them, he caught at the idea, forgetting, in the rage to which he was wrought, the light in which he had previously regarded his opponent—a light that should have made him disdain to meet him on a footing of equality, and fiercely demanded a meeting the ensuing day.

A kind of savage exultation pervaded the soul of Stovendale at the success of his plan; whilst he joyed to think of being shortly in all probability freed from an existence now hateful to him from his altered state, he joyed still more at the idea of the ample revenge he should now obtain for the apparently-unnatural conduct of his eldest son. Insensible as he had hitherto appeared to his claims upon him, he

could not believe him so lost to feeling as not to think with lasting horror and shuddering of having shed, though innocently, it was true, the blood of a parent: in dwelling on all he would suffer in the fearful moment of discovery, in anticipating this moment of exquisite revenge, all else was forgotten—all reflection, all consideration for the feelings of others—what his unhappy wife would endure at this dreadful termination of their union—the aggravated grief his death in such a manner must occasion to Hastings.

The hour and place were quickly fixed, and the moment they parted he sped to engage a careless kind of being, whom he had met twice or thrice at Dr. Grafton's, and who, he knew, would ask him no more questions than he chose to answer, for his second; while Grandison, hastening back to the inn, revealed to Walter all that had occurred, and demanded of him to attend him the next morning in the same capacity. For a moment Walter hesitated to reply—there was something

so horrible in the idea of letting the son unconsciously endanger the life of the parent, that, callous and unprincipled as he was, he still shrunk from the thought; but when he reflected on the happy consequences that might accrue to himself should Grandison fall in the combat, his hesitation was over, and he consented to do as he wished.

At the appointed hour the adversaries met. The interval had not been passed without feelings being awakened in the mind of Stovendale, that, had he yielded to them, would have made him shrink from the measure he had provoked; but, either to allow himself to be considered a dastard, or else confess himself, without some triumph over his son, was not endurable, and accordingly he persevered. Yet, as his eyes again became involuntarily fixed on the countenance of Grandison, again his resolution nearly faltered, so strong a resemblance did he trace in it to the departed Eva. Oh God! was this

the return due for all she had suffered through his means, to curse, to fix an indelible stigma on her son? But it was too late to retract—there were witnesses present. The ground was measured—the signal for firing was given. The ball of Grandison hit his father in the arm, but his father's was fired in the air. He dropt at the instant, but entirely through the overpowering feelings he had been enduring. On perceiving this, Grandison involuntarily flung away his weapon, and hurried to his assistance. A kind of deadly sickness had by this time pervaded his frame, which attributing to his wound, he concluded it mortal; accordingly, as Grandison stooped to assist his second in raising him from the ground—"Parricide! I am revenged!" he cried, turning his apparently closing eyes upon him—"I am your father!" and fainted away.

"Good God! what does he mean?" was the wild exclamation of the astonished Grandison at this assertion: but vainly he demanded—the second could

not tell, and Walter, it must be superfluous to say, would not. At length, finding he could not obtain any satisfaction here, he assisted the former in bearing him to the Castle, which was at no great distance, while Walter, under the pretext of procuring immediate aid, hurried on before them, but in reality to hide his guilty confusion, and avoid interrogations that made him tremble. But no such aid as he pretended he quitted them to procure was obtained till a messenger was dispatched from the Castle.

The arrival of Dr. Grafton elucidated all that Grandison required to know. On acquainting him with what the now-insensible Stovendale had asserted, he briefly assured him he had asserted but what was correct, as, from the particulars he had learned respecting him, he was able to do; at the same time expressing his astonishment at Grandison's own avowed ignorance of those particulars, and wonder at the recent affair, acquainted as was one of

the parties with their connexion to each other.

But on neither head could Grandison now give him any satisfaction—he was absolutely bewildered with horror and surprise; the wound which but a moment before he had considered as trifling, he now magnified to one of mortal magnitude; he sickened at the sight of the blood, and could with difficulty preserve himself from fainting. But when the examination of the wound gave him to understand there was nothing to fear—when Dr. Grafton solemnly assured him he scarcely thought more of it than he should of one inflicted by his lancet, how great, how unutterable was his ecstacy!—tears of gratitude gushed from his manly eyes, and piously bending his knee to the floor, he returned thanks to Heaven for being saved the horror of thinking he was the destroyer of his parent.

It was at this moment the eyes of Stovendale reopened. The look, the attitude

of Grandison, so expressive of all he felt, were resistless—the impulse of nature could no longer be suppressed—he fell upon his neck, and as he strained him to his breast, invoked the choicest blessings of Heaven on him. This emotion, while it heightened Grandison's, added to his astonishment at what had recently passed. The explanation he demanded filled his father with confusion; but it was not to be avoided—he had committed himself too completely not to be compelled to be explicit. Accordingly the person who had acted as his second having previously withdrawn, he proceeded, before Dr. Grafton, to acknowledge both his motive for not revealing himself to his son, and for endeavouring to provoke him to the recent meeting.

Grandison shuddered.—"Good God!" he involuntarily exclaimed, "how could a father's heart meditate entailing such a curse upon a son!"

"How!" repeated Stovendale reproachfully, half kindling into resentful passion;

"but did that son ever act as one? did he ever acknowledge the claims of a father upon his feelings? did he ever seek the paternal home, to evince the duty and affection of a son?"

"No," returned Grandison, warmly; "but why? because I was led to believe, from the cruel silence and neglect of that father relative to me, that in that home I should have been considered as a stranger —that I should have been repelled and repulsed from it as an intruder. God is my witness, that the first, the earliest yearnings of my heart were towards it; but these persuasions interdicted my yielding to them."

"We have both then been most barbarously deceived," cried his father; and he entered into a particular account of the many efforts he had made to see, or hear, at least, from time to time, of him, and which he had persevered in till assured by the earl it was his (Grandison's) own wish to have no intercourse with him, in consequence of the second connexion he

had formed. "But I see—I see how it was," he added—"a cruel and selfish policy made him dread our having any communication."

Grandison feared it was as he asserted; and grieved was he to his innermost soul at the thought, wishing, as he did, to feel nothing but unqualified reverence and respect for the being to whom he owed such obligations as he did to his grandfather. But he trusted the future would make atonement for the past—that the representation of the catastrophe that was so near being occasioned by the deceptions that had been practised would not only prevent any further restrictions on his intercourse with his family, but obtain for him the power of aiding him in his present embarrassments. Full of this hope, he decided on an immediate return to Rock Fort.

His motive for this decision required no explanation. His father (all the feelings of a father now awakened in his bosom for him) knew not how to part with

him; but the expediency of his being himself the person to explain to the earl all that had lately occurred, in order to prevent any misconstruction or misrepresentation, was too evident to allow of his yielding to the feelings that would have hindered his departure.

Again assured that the wound in his arm was so slight that a second bandage would scarcely be requisite for it, after a long conference, Grandison took what he hoped would be but a short leave of him, and hastening back to the inn to give orders for his immediate departure, was not a little surprised to find, instead of Walter, a letter from him, stating that, on his return thither, he had found a letter awaiting him from the earl, which so earnestly urged his being in another quarter without further delay, that he was fain to depart without seeing him again.

Grandison could not help thinking this very extraordinary, that, under the circumstances in which he had left him, he should have thought of departing without

seeing him again, at least for an instant; but as yet he knew not how to suspect him, and accordingly soon ceased to dwell on the subject.

He quickly set out, but the speed with which he wished to travel was prevented by the season; the roads in many places were flooded, and almost in every direction impediments thrown in his way. At length, however, he reached Rock Fort; but the evil spirit had been there before him: the guilty consciousness of Walter made him not only dread being liable to his further interrogations, but deem it absolutely expedient that he should be beforehand with him in explaining to the earl what had lately occurred: this he did by a wilful and absolute misrepresentation of facts. But to trace him through the labyrinth of falsehood he invented would be tiresome; suffice it, he succeeded in persuading the earl that, instead of being the means of bringing Grandison down to E——, he had found him there, owing, as he discovered by chance, to an intima-

tion from his father of its being at present his abode; and that the whole of what he was about hearing from the former was a fabrication, invented for the purpose of working upon his feelings through the medium of horror and remorse.

Lord Fitzossory was both surprised and shocked at Grandison's being capable of any deception; he scarcely knew, however, how to regret the circumstance, furnishing him as it did with an excuse to his own mind for still interdicting his correspondence with his family. But though he longed to give utterance to the indignation it excited, it was decided, on Walter's account, who contrived to see him in such a manner as prevented any one else knowing of his sudden return to Rock Fort, that he should appear utterly unapprised of it.

But extreme agitation seldom allows us to be on our guard: more than once, during the statement of Grandison, sudden bursts of indignation almost led the former to believe some one had been before-

hand with him in detailing facts. Could Walter be acting a double part?—but no —he inquired, and was assured he had not returned since his departure some time before on business, neither had the earl recently received any letter. At length the earl, collecting himself, came to a decision —Whether he credited or did not credit what he had stated, he would not, he declared, say; but this he would, that either he must give up him or else his father, as he never would sanction his intercourse with a man so utterly unworthy and undeserving the name of parent. If the former were his decision, the world would justify him for punishing such base ingratitude and dereliction from filial duty, by estranging from him all that was in his power to alienate.

Grandison was in a cruel dilemma: vain were arguments, entreaties, and remonstrances; he was called upon to decide, but how could he obey the imperative command—how bring himself to renounce the being who, from unceasing affection

and waning years, had such claims upon him—a father, situated as his was—a father, of whose ever feeling for him as a parent should, he had now no doubt? He implored some time for deliberation: indignantly it was granted. But in vain he weighed the opposing claims of gratitude and nature, and ere he had come, or rather could think of coming to any decision, a letter arrived from Dr. Grafton, acquainting him with the death of his father, through a fever which had for some time been lurking in his veins, and which the recent dreadful agitation of his mind had brought to a crisis.

This of course put an end to any further argument with his grandfather: he alone could have come in any competition with the duty he conceived he owed him. Accordingly, as soon as he had a little recovered from the shock it occasioned his feelings, he contented himself with a mere message of condolence through Dr. Grafton to the survivors, prevented at present from any thing more by the prejudice ex-

cited against them by the artful machinations of the unprincipled Walter.

CHAPTER III.

" Friend to the wretch whom every friend forsakes,
I woo thee, Death! In fancy's fairy paths
Let the gay songster rove, and gently trill
The strain of empty joy."

Mrs. Stovendale, whose stay in Dublin was prolonged by her determination not to quit it till she had obtained proper convoy for Fidelia to England, was not a little shocked, on her return to E——, to find her husband in a state that allowed him to know her but at intervals. Dr. Grafton did not attempt to hide the danger he was in from her, and accordingly she lost no time in summoning her son, whom she had hitherto, under various pretexts, contrived to keep off from visiting them there, aware they could not meet without a dreadful explanation taking place.

But though her summons was promptly obeyed, Hastings arrived too late to receive the last sigh of his penitent father; the looks of the shrinking domestics at once announced the dismal fact, and excited feelings that nearly overcame him. Desiring his mother to be cautiously informed of his arrival, he proceeded to the chamber of death, to give vent to them. With all his faults, Mr. Stovendale had ever been the tenderest and most affectionate of parents, and deep and intense was the consequent affliction of his son; with quivering lips he kissed his marble forehead, and dewed his ashy lips with the gushing tears of filial sorrow.

From the indulgence of these natural feelings he was roused by a summons to his mother. Her arms expanded to receive him, but for a few minutes a burst of sorrow prevented utterance. Convinced then that the longer she delayed the agonizing disclosure she had to make, the more distressing she should find it, she proceeded to inform him of the additional

cause he had for grief—of all, in short, which he had before only suspected—the entire ruin the fatal indiscretion of his father had brought upon them.—" But oh, my Hastings!" she cried, with clasped hands and gushing tears, " think not too hardly of him!—let the assurance of his deep repentance atone for his errors, and obtain your love for his memory!"

How unnecessary these supplications to such a heart as his, ever more prone to forgive than resent, and whose affection for his parents was incorporated with his being! Yet, though it was not in his nature to dwell with the acrimony of resentment on the conduct of his erring father, he could not but deprecate it, and secretly wonder at the infatuation that had led to it.

The shock of this painful disclosure a little subsided, Mrs. Stovendale proceeded to state that, as far as she could gather from the disordered state of their affairs, a few hundreds, depending on the honour of an individual to pay, were all they had

to depend on, creditors being in possession of every other part of the property.

The very soul of Hastings was chilled by this statement: acutely as he must have felt the overthrow of the flattering hopes and expectations in which he was educated, yet still faint was what he endured on his own account to what he felt on his mother's; to have her exposed to privations, to insolence, to want perhaps, was more than he could think of without agony. Was there no hope to cling to for her? Oh no—the only being they had a right to look to in this hour of calamity, his brother, had long since evinced that they must not consider him as a relative; and, if they had previously doubted such being his wish, would not the cold, the formal compliment of condolence received that morning at the Castle have confirmed it? Indignation and grief alike assailed his heart as he dwelt on it; alternately the paleness of one was succeeded by the crimson glow of the other. —"Good God! how could he have given

utterance to any thing so cold, so repelling? But his wishes shall be complied with," he exclaimed, with the bitter smile of lacerated pride and feeling; "no woe, no want, no suffering, shall ever induce me to seek a knowledge of him; if ever we know each other, it shall be but by chance."

But what a cruel aggravation of wretchedness, to think he had so near a relative without being allowed to consider him in the light of one! Denied this consolation, the greatest that suffering can experience, that of having the sympathy and advice it conceives it has a right to claim, he felt scarcely able to resist the influence of despair; but his feelings as a son made him struggle against it; he was sensible that on him his mother now relied for all the comfort she was capable of, and on her account he struggled with his feelings.

It is here requisite to observe, that of the knowledge his father and Grandison had acquired of each other he remained

utterly ignorant; Stovendale had become so impressed with the atrociousness of what he had meditated, that, shuddering at the idea of its being known either to his wife or son, he had extorted a solemn promise from the few who had the power of giving any information on the subject, to conceal, at least for the present, all that had occurred during the absence of the former. Thus nothing was known to either that could prevent their forming the most injurious opinion concerning Grandison.

In due time the funeral of the erring Stovendale took place: real grief shuns observation; Mrs. Stovendale therefore resisted the feeling that urged her to accompany his remains to the grave; but nothing could prevent her visiting the mournful spot the next day; towards its decline she proceeded thither with Hastings. In agony she wept over it; the feelings she had so long tried to stem and confine within her bosom now burst forth with violence. Was their union then dissolved—the fond tie that had so long bound them to each

other rent asunder? The very anxieties it had been the means of occasioning her had perhaps but added to her attachment for him, by causing a degree of pity to be mingled with the other feelings he inspired. At length, utterly helpless and exhausted, she fell upon the bosom of Hastings.

To convey her home was his immediate wish, but without assistance he felt this to be impossible, and how to obtain it he knew not, not a cabin being in sight. In the midst of this dilemma, while vainly endeavouring to sooth and revive her, a young man, in mourning as deep as his own, stepped forward from a shaded part of the churchyard, and begged he might be allowed to render him the assistance he required. With a grateful acknowledgment for his kindness, Hastings readily accepted his services.

By the time she had reached the Castle, Mrs. Stovendale had a little recovered herself, and, grateful for the attention she had

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received, united with Hastings in entreating the stranger to stop a little while and partake of the refreshment that was bringing in. He consented, and the prepossession inspired by his humanity was not lessened by his looks or manner: his person was of a description that could not be seen without admiration; his countenance was pale, but lovely, and his manner indicative of a mind at once feeling and elegant.

While conversing, Dr. Grafton entered. The stranger was the first person his eyes encountered, and he started at beholding him; but quickly recovering from the emotion his seeing him there had evidently excited, he immediately accosted him, with something like an air of familiarity, by the name of Auberville. The doctor's knowledge of him gave the mourners an opportunity of having the curiosity he had excited gratified; he was a person, the doctor said, unacquainted in the neighbourhood, but whose connexions were per-

fectly known to him, and who had come there on a very melancholy errand.

That Mrs. Stovendale should now return to England was absolutely expedient, but to do so in less than a few days was impossible. During these a perfect intimacy took place with Auberville—every day added to the predilection his new friends had conceived for him; there was something so warm-hearted, so ingenuous in his manner, that Hastings's chief consolation was derived from conversing with him, and even the languid spirits of Mrs. Stovendale were cheered when he was by.

"Oh, had I such a brother!" once burst from the lips of Hastings, after listening to some advice from him relative to military matters, evidently dictated by the warmest interest in his affairs.

"Have you not a brother?" asked Auberville.

"Yes—oh yes," answered Hastings, impatiently kindling with resentful feelings, and hastily rising from his chair, "but——"

"But only nominally," said Dr. Grafton, who was present, finishing the sentence for him; "colonel Grandison, as far as I could learn, has never acted as one."

"On this subject pray, pray, my dear doctor, forbear," said Mrs. Stovendale; "you know not how it would grieve me to have any prejudice excited against colonel Grandison on our account—both on account of his father and mother it would pain me, for the latter was amongst my best and dearest friends."

"You are generous, madam," said Auberville, "to allow such recollections to prevent your censuring where you consider it due."

"Perhaps so," returned Mrs. Stovendale; "but not more so, I am sure, than my son; his warm feelings, of course, make him regret not meeting answering feelings in return in the bosom of so near a relative. But to expose him to unpleasant animadversion on that account would, I know, be most painful to him."

The day previous to her departure, Dr.

Grafton called early, and, after a little prefacing, said that Auberville having, through one means or other, learned how unhappily she was then situated, had deputed him to entreat that, till the arrangement of her affairs, she would accept the accommodation of a cottage he had unoccupied in the vicinity of the metropolis.

Mrs. Stovendale felt truly grateful for this kind offer, but still both she and Hastings shrunk from accepting such an obligation from a person so recently known to them; they accordingly entreated the doctor to decline it for them, but in such a manner as should not hurt his feelings.

That he executed his commission dexterously they could not deny, and however grieved he might be at the rejection of his offer, no indication of being offended by it appeared in his manner.

A correspondence was settled between him and Hastings.—"I," cried he, "like you, have to regret the coldness and estrangement of near connexions, and

consequently seek for a friend to supply their place to me."

Midway between Holyhead and London, Mrs. Stovendale stopped at a farmhouse, the mistress of which had once been a dependent of hers, with an intention of remaining there till the arrangement of her affairs; but Hastings speeded on: from the inspection of his father's papers, he conceived that a Mr. Bryerly would be a very likely person to assist him in the recovery of all that he could now claim of the property of the deceased, and accordingly, as soon as he arrived in town, he waited on him, to solicit his aid in the matter.

This Mr. Bryerly was no other than the one already known to our readers. By dexterous management he had been enabled to turn the sharp corner with which he had come in contact, and with his family was again reinstated in a handsome house, in a fashionable street in the metropolis.

He readily acceded to the request of

Hastings, and not only this, but pressed him, as long as he remained in town, to consider his house as his home. Hastings felt truly grateful for his kindness; but, had he been able to penetrate the motive whence it sprung, disgust, not gratitude, would have been his predominant feeling at it. Mr. Bryerly indeed was of the family of the Surfaces, and most generally had other motives for his actions than those he chose to avow: in every thing he did, he had his own interest in view; not a step did he take, not a project did he form, that had not this consideration in view. By chance he had become intimately acquainted with the late Mr. Stovendale, and, from the consequence he had known the family to be of, could not help being delighted at the opportunity that now occurred of becoming acquainted with the son, conceiving, from his ignorance of the entire ruin that had befallen Mr. Stovendale, that in some way or other he should be benefited by the circum-

stance. Hence the readiness with which he promised his solicited services to Hastings, and hence the warmth of his manner to him. But such was the dejection of Hastings's mind, that not even this had power to induce him to become a visitor at his house, till chance discovered to him that it contained a being most interesting to his feelings.

The ruin which, by artful manœuvring, Mr. Dundonald had long staved off, at length overwhelmed him—his house stopped payment; and to avoid the first burst of the storm this must excite, he clandestinely and precipitately left ——— with Albina, without explaining to her his motives for this procedure till they had crossed to the other kingdom. The explanation he then gave was, in its astounding effect, like an unexpected clap of thunder; and not even filial piety could have restrained her from reproaching him for the cruel treachery he now betrayed having practised on her unfortunate grandfather and grandmother, but the state she

saw him in—he was indeed tortured to the quick; to retrieve the past he saw impossible, and after so long lording it over even the lordly, and revelling in all the luxuries of life, it was more than he could bear. The distraction of his mind brought on a feverish complaint, but not all the tears or supplications of Albina could induce him to stop in his way to the metropolis, for the purpose of paying some attention to his health, so great was his dread of being traced by some of his enraged creditors; they accordingly proceeded to it with all possible expedition; but by the time they reached it, he was in a state that precluded all further exertion; all he was able to do was to apprise Mr. Bryerly, with whom, in the course of his transactions with the army, he had become intimate, of his arrival, and to entreat his services on this distressing occasion.

Mr. Bryerly readily obeyed this summons, and to his attentions and those of his family it was perhaps alone owing that

Albina was saved from sinking into the grave after her father, when, in the course of a few days, by being bereaved of him, she found herself bereaved of the only person whom she could at this exact period look to for protection. But not to the humane motives she ascribed it to was the attention she now received from Mr. Bryerly and his family: from his knowledge of the affairs of the deceased, Mr. Bryerly could not avoid imagining that considerable property must still remain for his family; and to this persuasion, and the belief that the illustrious connexions Dundonald so often proudly boasted of would be grateful for any kindness shewn her at this distressing period, were entirely owing his attentions to her, and bringing her to his house immediately after the performance of the last duties for the departed.

Here a surprise awaited her that had a soothing effect upon her agitated mind; for what, in the hour of affliction, so efficacious as the sight of a being we truly

love?—here, to her inexpressible surprise, she found Fidelia—the beloved friend and companion, from whom neither malice nor detraction had been able to alienate her regard. But to account for Fidelia being again under the roof of beings from whom she had experienced such persecution must now be necessary.

CHAPTER IV.

" But chief my fear the dangers mov'd
That virtue's path inclose;
My heart the wise pursuit approv'd,
But, oh, what toils oppose !"

As already stated, Mrs. Stovendale had decided on not leaving Dublin till she had provided proper protection for Fidelia to London; by indefatigable exertions she at length learned that a highly-respectable tradeswoman was about proceeding there, and to her immediately got herself

introduced, for the purpose of obtaining her care so far for her.

What she requested was readily granted; but unlucky incidents often counteract our wishes and intentions: Fidelia with her companion had scarcely reached Howth ere an express overtook them, to inform the latter that one of her children had met with an accident just after her quitting home, that rendered it absolutely expedient she should return thither directly.

This necessity placed Fidelia in a most distressing dilemma: should she return to Dublin, there was no one there to receive her, at the moment of taking leave of Mrs. Stovendale, a chaise being at the door to reconvey her back to E——; yet, to undertake such a journey as that to London by herself, was even terrific to her imagination. To remain in Dublin by herself, however, for any time, was not to be thought of; and equally impossible was it, after what had occurred there, to follow Mrs. Stovendale to E——. After a little further hesitation, therefore, she decided

on embarking, trying to subdue the agitation occasioned by the decision, by the consideration of the expedition with which the journey would be performed, and her having a certain place to go to at its termination.

The passage was short, and, purposely confined to her birth during the whole of it, she avoided all notice and observation that might have embarrassed her.

Immediately after landing, she was informed of a vacant place in a coach just setting off for Shrewsbury, and without hesitation secured it. The other passengers were just what she wished to meet with—quiet and respectable; and so far on her journey she advanced without any thing disagreeable.

She slept here, but was not a little discomposed by finding her being able to resume her journey the next morning very uncertain. While at breakfast, a coach for London arrived; but on her starting up to see whether there was a vacant seat, to her inexpressible distress she saw it com-

pletely filled by a family party, as she discovered by the conversation that ensued between them, on their alighting to breakfast, in the room where she was. It consisted of a fat mother—three grown-up daughters, in as good condition as the mamma—a maiden aunt, as lean and as lank as the lay-brother in the opera of the Duenna, but, to judge from the fierceness of her eyes, making up in spirit what she wanted in flesh—and a gawky son, bearing a strong resemblance to the personification given of master Abel in the Honest Thieves.

While intent on the refreshments before them, Fidelia stole out to solicit the interference of some one in the house with the coachman. The coachman readily promised he would do all in his power to get her accommodated, though his coach had already its limited number of passengers; accordingly, as soon as the party were again seated, or rather stowed within it, he preferred his suit to Lion for her.—"The poor young lady," he said, "seems sadly

hampered to get up to town, and I am sure such a slight thing as she is might readily be packed in one of these here corners."

"You are sure!" exclaimed the lady-mother—"Well, if this isn't too bad—going to stiver us up with a seventh person! Why, though it's winter weather, if I am not melting away like a pound of butter in the dog-days!" fanning herself as she spoke with a paper bag.

"A pretty thing indeed!" vociferated the daughters.

"I tell you what, mother," cried the son, struggling forward from the back of the coach, against which his sisters had absolutely wedged him, "whether you let her in or not, I'll get out and ride on the top till dusk; for the girls are so fat, they swelter me so, I can bear it on no account no longer."

"You will, numskull!" said the aunt. "So I suppose we shall have a broken head for to pay for?"

"Well, and what then? It's not Skin-

flint that will have to pay for the mending of it."

"Hold your tongue, Dick," cried the mother, "or I'll surely give you a box on the ear. I don't care nothink about your riding atop till dusk.—But harkee, Mr. Coachman, he's not to give up his place for nothing; if he does, this young person who wants it so badly must pay for it, and he only be charged as an outside."

"To be sure, mistress—I warrant she'll be agreeable to any thing you choose;" not a little pleased to have carried his point, and beckoning Fidelia to advance.

But not all the patience she had evinced during this argument had had the effect of producing the smallest interest for her; though she consented to pay the full price for her accommodation, and in reality only got what another would not keep, she was considered as an intruder, one on whom an obligation had been conferred, and who, therefore, might be treated as they pleased. But, though absolutely pent up so she

could not move, her thankfulness at having got a place, and being with a party from which she had nothing to fear, was too great to permit any symptoms of dissatisfaction; she was given indeed to understand that people who come on chance must be content to be squeezed, and that first come was first served, all the world over.

At length they stopt for dinner, a meal Fidelia was astonished they could require, from the manner in which they had been chiefly employed since quitting Shrewsbury; they did ample justice to it, however, but without bestowing the smallest notice on the dejected stranger, master Dicky excepted, whose eyes, as he lifted them from time to time from his plate, in the elegant act of picking a bone, began to pay her some flattering compliments. At length an exclamation of thankfulness from the mother, for a good dinner, broke the silence that had for some time been prevailing, and which was followed by a declaration that the driver should have

someat more than he expected, for letting them sit long enough to enjoy it.

But, as night approached, Fidelia became again agitated at the idea of master Dicky's resuming his seat, and her thus being compelled to stop on the road; but to her extreme relief, on his mother's reminding him it was now time to do so, he peremptorily refused, owing to the amusement he derived from the mixture of persons on the outside.

At length, about the middle of the ensuing day, the journey was terminated; the stage stopped in the city, and immediately on quitting it Fidelia had a coach called, in which she set out for Turnham Green, having a letter from Mrs. Stovendale, recommending her to the especial care and kindness of a lady keeping a boarding-school there, and who, from being a person she had long patronized, she was convinced she would pay every attention to her.

But, what she had too often experienced before, disappointment, awaited her here;

the lady to whom she had the letter was dead, and her school disposed of to a person who knew nothing of Mrs. Stovendale. In vain, when Fidelia had recovered from the shock of this previous information, did she solicit to be allowed to remain under her roof till she could hear from Mrs. Stovendale, or at least be recommended to some place where she might have the satisfaction of thinking herself safe; coldly and formally she told her she made it a rule never to concern herself about strangers, and saying she was particularly engaged, she rang the bell for a servant to shew her out, and retired.

What would become of her, was the reflection of the agonized Fidelia at this moment — whither to bend her steps, where to seek for a shelter, she knew not; but no time was to be lost in endeavouring to procure one, for night was rapidly approaching, and she shuddered to think of its arrival without knowing where to rest herself. Suddenly it occurred to her, that perhaps in the village where she then

was she might procure what she required; accordingly trying to collect herself, she told the coachman she would be back in a few minutes, and with faltering steps set out on her search; but it proved unsuccessful—there was a bill or two up, but a young female seeking lodgings by herself, at such an hour, was not a person any one of caution would receive; and in despair she was returning to the coach, almost sick at the moment of an existence that so many circumstances had bitterly seemed to say was of no interest to any one, when she suddenly beheld a man muffled up to the very eyes beside her. She happened at the moment to be in a very lonely part of the road, and in consequence felt great alarm at the circumstance; though shaking in every limb, she tried to quicken her pace, but her speed was suddenly arrested by his catching her arm. A scream was bursting from her lips, when his voice repressed it.—"You do not recognize me then?" said her friend from America, or, as for the

present we shall style him, for the sake of brevity, the exile.

"Have I then met with a friend?" cried Fidelia, involuntarily seizing his hand and pressing it between hers—"This is joy—this is transport indeed! Heaven still, I see, watches over me," and briefly she related her forlornness at the moment.

"Thank God—thank God then we have met!" ejaculated the exile, with fervour. "Oh! if 'tis delightful at any time to meet with those we regard, how doubly so is it when we can render them a service! Calm your mind, and, rely upon it, you shall have nothing more to fear for the want of protection."

He then proceeded with her to the coach, which having entered, he directed the coachman whither to go. A few minutes sufficed to bring them to the place: they alighted at the massive and iron-wrought gates of an old gloomy-looking mansion, standing a little way from the road; an elderly female gave them admission, whom the exile taking aside after

the coachman was dismissed, continued speaking to for a few minutes, and then led the way to a spacious parlour, where a cheerful fire was burning. Here, having ordered tea (the refreshment Fidelia chose), he proceeded to entreat a more particular explanation of what had recently occurred than in the first agitated moment of meeting she had been able to give him.

Fidelia felt confused by this request, unwilling to let him know that it was through his means she had been placed in so distressing a predicament; to evade what he requested, however, being impossible, she endeavoured to collect herself, and simply stated, what indeed was no deviation from the truth, that Mrs. Stovendale was so unsettled at present, she conceived it better to part with her for a while; and proceeded to recapitulate the circumstance to which was owing the disappointment of the arrangement she had made for her.

"Again, then, must I express my joy at our unexpected meeting," said her com-

panion; "from the manner in which you were especially recommended to my care, I look upon you as a being absolutely delegated to it, nor will lose sight of you till I see you safely lodged. You must then lose no time in writing to Mrs. Stovendale; but remember that, whatever explanation you give her, no mention be made of me."

Fidelia assured him he might rely on her inviolable silence, and, urged by her feelings, was on the point of mentioning she should give him proof of the confidence he might repose in her, but checked herself, for fear of hurting his.

He in his turn now stated, that, immediately after their last interview, private intimation of his meeting a person in England, whom it was most important to him to see, had hurried him over; but, disappointed of finding him in the vicinity of the metropolis, as he had been led to imagine, he was on the point of seeking him elsewhere.

"And in the interim," fearfully demanded Fidelia, "are you safe here?"

"I have reason to believe so," he replied. "The house was long since purchased by the late earl of Castle Dermot, and of course now belongs to his son; but as, even in his occasional visits to London, he scarcely ever comes to it, no establishment is kept in it. I am therefore here as solitary and secluded as I could wish to be. You are not to understand, however, that it is with his lordship's privity I am its occupant—I doubt much indeed his knowing whether I am still in existence; but the humble friend who attends me for the purpose of watching over my safety, from a knowledge of the Irish servant entrusted with the care of it, suggested to me its being the securest place I could be lodged in in the vicinity of the metropolis."

Mutual explanations having been given, he asked whether she had yet deliberated on her foster-parent's proposition of accompanying him to America? Fidelia can-

didly confessed she shrank from it, more especially from the attachment she had formed to Mrs. Stovendale, and the firm confidence she had now reason to believe she might place in that lady's regard and friendship.

The exile sighed deeply, and said he did not wonder at her shrinking from the thought of abandoning her native place—it was bursting indeed the strongest cords almost that nature twines around the heart. He grew pale, and rising from his chair, walked about the room for some time, evidently in too much emotion to be able to speak.—Oh! how did the sight of this emotion affect the feeling heart of Fidelia! silently the tears of pity stole down her cheek, and fell upon her sympathizing bosom. To be denied even the consolation of lingering amidst the scenes of past happiness—to have even the indulgence of grief interrupted by terror and apprehension—how cruel! how deplorable!

The fatigue and anxiety she had re-

cently gone through at length completely exhausted her agitated spirits; accordingly the servant was summoned to conduct her to the chamber prepared for her. Less fatigued, she doubtless could not have refrained from musing on the strange and eventful incidents she met with; but now, completely exhausted both in body and mind, sleep soon weighed down her wearied eyelids.

At her usual hour she started from it, and impatient to have some arrangement made that should remove her from her present awkward and embarrassing situation, she hastily dressed herself, and had just finished her toilet when she was startled by a bustle outside the chamber-door. She listened a minute, and finding then that, whoever the persons were she heard, they were intent on entering, she hastily retreated into a small adjoining dressing-room.

Scarcely had she taken shelter here when she beheld a man entering, followed by Hannah the servant. If her consternation

at this was great, we may easily believe it was not a little augmented, when in the accents of the intruder she distinguished those of lord Castle Dermot. It seemed he had recently arrived from Ireland, and had been at a private masquerade at Richmond, whence, owing to a sudden whim, he had come to take a bed at his usually-neglected mansion, instead of returning to the hotel where he lodged in London. Hannah, under various pretexts, tried to prevail on him to retire to another chamber from the one he had now entered; but, with the perverseness peculiar to the state he was in (it being evident he had been no bad disciple of Anacreon's that night), he persisted in remaining where he was; and after cursing her for her impudence in attempting to oppose him, ordered her to make him some tea while he undressed.

She durst not disobey him, and with terror inconceivable Fidelia saw her retire. What to do in this dilemma she knew not, there being no door to the

room she had shut herself in but the one by which she had entered; all she could decide on was softly to try to secure this, and then remain quiet till his lordship was asleep, which, from the state it was plain he was in, she trusted would be soon: but, in trying to bolt it, she found she could not do so without a noise being made that could not fail of engaging his attention, and accordingly was forced to content herself with standing against it.

In the meanwhile, as he reeled about the room, he alternately made efforts to shake off his fantastic trappings, and whistle some of the waltzes of the preceding evening. At last he approached the door. Fidelia made a desperate effort to secure it—but in vain—his lordship's effort to push it open succeeded, and he beheld her. But scarcely could a Medusa's head have produced a more instantaneous effect upon him—for a moment he became absolutely transfixed, then bursting out into rapturous exclamations—"Fidelia!" he cried—"the lovely, the

enchanting! In the name of all that's beautiful and bewitching—of the very god of love and frolic himself—do I in reality behold her?" half raising her face, which she had involuntarily covered with her hands.

She attempted to account in some plausible way for her being there; how she came there was, however, of very little consequence to his lordship to know at the moment—to find her there was quite sufficient for him. Suddenly catching her in his arms, his lips, fevered by the excesses of the preceding night, were pressed to her cold cheek with an audacity that made her tremble—almost she shrieked; the cry of terror was alone prevented by dread on the exile's account; he could not hear it, she was convinced, without rushing to her aid; and, should he be seen, what might not be the fatal consequence! Lord Castle Dermot might not respect the tie that connected them, and, should he be dragged to death through her means, what must be her sufferings!

She tried to kneel, she tried to supplicate —but in vain; at length she succeeded in bursting from his grasp. But, ere she had reached the outer door, she was again encircled in his arms.

A hasty step was now heard ascending the stairs: lord Castle Dermot endeavoured to secure the door, but the person they had heard was too quick for him; a gentleman in a domino burst in, and was beginning to reproach his lordship for the slip he had given him (for it seems he had promised him a bed, but which the potent fumes of the Tuscan grape had rendered him forgetful of), when the sight of Fidelia at once rendered him silent and motionless. As his eyes fell upon her, she almost fancied she saw him change colour, and the consternation he certainly evinced added, if possible, to the cruel embarrassment and distress of the moment.

"I beg pardon," he at length said, "for my intrusion; had I known how your lordship was situated—on what blissful anticipations you must have been indulg-

ing, I certainly should neither have followed nor been surprised at your forgetfulness."

He was then retiring, when, in agony of terror and shame, Fidelia stopped him. —"Oh, in mercy free me!" she exclaimed. "Appearances are against me, but, God is my witness, I merit not aspersion; chance alone has thrown me in the way of this man. The servant of the house can testify the truth of what I say."

Hannah now made her appearance; she had tremblingly followed the stranger, and, emboldened by his presence, now came forward on this appeal to her. It was very true, she declared, what the young lady had said. She was standing the preceding night at the gate, when one of the Richmond stages in passing broke down, and seeing the young lady who was in it very much frightened and by herself, she had invited her into the house, and to stop till morning; and she was just going when his lordship, she must say, broke in upon her in a very rude manner.

" Well, madam," said the stranger, addressing himself to Fidelia with a smile that brightened his whole countenance, " if you will accept my services, I shall be most happy to protect you home: the carriage that brought me hither is in waiting, and my pride will be equal to my pleasure if you entrust yourself to me. Upon my soul," with increasing earnestness, " you may. My name is Cleveland. I have the honour of bearing a commission in his majesty's navy, and, though no saint, curse me if I would not as soon fire upon the sinking ship of an enemy as offer an affront to an innocent or unprotected woman! So *allons*, dear lady, if you will allow me to be your escort on this occasion; for though perhaps rude and rough both by nature and profession, yet can I well enter into all the delicacies of your present situation."

In anxiety to free herself from the injurious surmises that situation must have excited, and the further libertinism of lord Castle Dermot, every thing else was for-

gotten at the moment by Fidelia: eagerly she accepted the proffered services of captain Cleveland; yet was she cruelly embarrassed when, after handing her into the coach, he asked her address; for a moment she was in utter dismay at her inability to give one; then suddenly recollecting a milliner in Bond-street where the Miss Bryerlys dealt, she desired to be driven there.

Not without opposition did lord Castle Dermot permit her to depart, or a threat of vengeance for the officious interference of captain Cleveland. Nothing could be more respectful, more soothingly attentive, than the manner of her companion during their short ride to town; and with feelings of gratitude, admiration, and esteem, she received his parting bow, and earnest wish for an opportunity of yet further cultivating her acquaintance.

But scarcely had she gained admission to the place where she desired to be set down, and which, not choosing to make herself known, she made her wanting to make some slight purchase a pretext for

entering, ere the expediency of returning without delay to that she had just come from occurred to her; else she might be missed by her friend—else an alarm excited in his mind for her safety that might render him regardless of his own. At this dismaying idea her terror became uncontrollable, and hurrying away, she paused not till she had reached a stand of coaches in Oxford-street. After beckoning to one, and while the step was letting down, she accidentally looked up, and beheld captain Cleveland at the door of an opposite coffee-house. Her confusion at this was unutterable: immediately lowering her eyes, she hastily entered the coach, trusting she had escaped his recognition; for, should he have seen her, what might he not infer from seeing her so immediately quitting a place she had allowed him to consider her home?

As she drove on, she strove to collect herself. By this time, from the state in which his lordship had been left, she doubted not his being in the enjoyment

of the repose he needed, and that, of course, she might safely enter the house again. To guard, however, against accidents, she determined on alighting some distance from it; accordingly, on approaching it, she pulled the check-string. She had just reached the gate, and was trying to push it open, when a glimpse of some one at her elbow made her turn her head, and she beheld captain Cleveland. To describe what she felt at the moment would be impossible; it was not mere confusion she experienced—it was something like horror.

With ironical politeness, a smile, or rather sneer of derision, he apologized for the surprise, he said, he saw he had given her, and also for the trouble, he added, an unlucky intrusion had occasioned her to take of going to town; then requesting her to have the goodness to make his excuses to lord Castle Dermot on the same subject, he turned away with a low bow.

Fidelia, transfixed, stood gazing after him for a moment; almost was she tempted to call him back, but the involuntary

impulse was checked by the reflection that she had no vindication to give—no means, no power of justifying herself from the gross suspicions she saw she had incurred: to mortal she dared not communicate the secret that would at once have cleared her from them; and, after all, of what consequence (she tried to sooth the anguish occasioned by the thought) was his opinion of her, stranger as he was both to her and all she knew? But the argument failed of efficacy—she could not deride, she could not think lightly of the opinion of any human being—she could not think that she was an object of scorn—of contempt to any one, without a pang that rived her very heart, that struck through every fibre of her brain. Scarcely had she power to drag her trembling limbs along.

On reaching the hall-door, she gave a timid knock; but no one answering, after waiting a few minutes, she looked for another entrance, and spying an area-door, she descended to it. No one was below, and she softly proceeded to the hall. Find-

ing no one here, she stole towards the room where she had been sitting with the exile the preceding night; she glanced into it, but started back in trepidation on perceiving lord Castle Dermot there. But he had seen her, and her effort to retreat was useless; rushing out, he caught her in his arms. A faint cry escaped her at the moment, and, overpowered by terror, she fainted away. On reviving, she found herself in the arms of the exile, with lord Castle Dermot and Hannah standing beside her, busied in her recovery.

At the dangerous discovery that, she feared, from this had taken place, she was on the point of again relapsing into insensibility, when the exile, guessing the cause of the alarm she evinced, led her into another apartment, where he quickly tranquillized her mind by an assurance that an explanation had taken place between him and lord Castle Dermot, that ensured his safety as far as it depended on his lordship, and would also prevent her from

again meeting with any thing unworthy of either from him.

Great was the joy of the affrighted Fidelia at this disclosure. Had he indeed, she demanded, revealed to lord Castle Dermot the tie that connected them? and did he seem inclined to respect it? Both interrogations were answered in the affirmative; and he then proceeded to state that lord Castle Dermot was anxious in the extreme to make an apology in person for his recent conduct to her. Fidelia, however, begged to be excused seeing him again, saying she was perfectly satisfied to hear of his regret for it.

Finding her impatient to be gone, the exile proceeded to inform her he had heard of a house where she might at least safely remain till she heard from Mrs. Stovendale—a seedsman's in Kensington; adding, that she might rely he would not return to America without seeing her again. But though he informed her of his placing implicit confidence in lord

Castle Dermot, he soon gave her to understand it was only as far as related to himself, telling her she must go to this house by herself, as it would not be prudent that Hannah should accompany her.

Most unwilling was Fidelia to do this, but her reluctance was lessened by his assurance of every thing being arranged for her reception. A coach was sent for, and with mutual regret they parted.

But the cross accidents Fidelia was destined to meet with were not yet over. Scarcely had she approached Kensington, when the coach she was in broke down, and not without difficulty and danger were she and her trunk extricated from it.

When a little recovered from the fright occasioned by the accident, she was on the point of requesting a boy in the shop which she had been humanely invited to enter, to call another, when, opening her hand to see where she was to direct it, she found she had lost the direction given her by the exile, at the moment of parting, to the house, and which the agitation

she was in at the idea of being again thrown amidst strangers had prevented her examining; so that she was utterly ignorant of the name of the person it belonged to, or exactly where to find it. She was too much disturbed for a minute to know what to do; then, hoping she might be able to find it, she entreated permission to leave her trunk a little longer where it was, and sallied out in quest of her intended abode.

She had not proceeded far in quest of it, when she heard herself suddenly accosted from a coach-window. She looked up, and, to her inexpressible confusion, beheld the Bryerlys. Her immediate impulse was to retreat, but Mr. Bryerly was too quick for her; pulling the string, he jumped out, and, seizing her arm, held her fast, while his wife and daughter, following his example, quickly surrounded her, with interrogations of where had she come from, and whither was she going?

As well as she could speak, Fidelia gave the same explanation to them she had

done to the friend she had just parted from. But, since she was disappointed in the arrangement Mrs. Stovendale had made for her, whither was she going? was a question that immediately followed this explanation.

Harassed, agitated, and embarrassed, Fidelia, bursting into tears, involuntarily replied she knew not.

"Oh! well, I am glad we have met then," said Mr. Bryerly; "for as I consider myself still a kind of guardian to you, you shall come home with us, and remain till your friend has been apprised of what has happened. Come, come—no shrinking back; surely, if what you have stated be the fact, you must rejoice at meeting with protection."

Rejoice! assuredly she would, if certain that the protection now proffered would be such as she could wish; but she had suffered so much through the Bryerlys, that she shrunk from finding herself again in their power. Yet how to refuse the present offer she knew not, without sub-

jecting herself to the most injurious surmises, and perhaps danger; for, after all, she might not be able to find the house to which she had been directed.

Accordingly, but with a reluctance she could scarcely conceal, she suffered herself to be handed into the coach, and her trunk being taken up, in less than an hour after found herself quietly seated in the drawing-room of a handsome house, in one of the fashionable streets off Piccadilly, with the Bryerlys; scarcely could she believe herself awake when she found herself so, so little had she expected ever being their inmate again. How strange appeared the incidents that had led to her being thrown again in a degree upon them! But if she reviewed these with astonishment, not less did she dwell with surprise on the alteration that had taken place in the manner of the Bryerlys to her; they were no longer rude, no longer supercilious or unfeelingly curious, and the instinctive attachment which we feel for those whom we have early known began

gradually to revive in her heart for them. But could she have penetrated into theirs, she would have found little cause for obligation: to the protection she had obtained, and not to any feeling of pity or interest for her, was entirely owing that now tendered her by them; adopted, as it seemed to them, in a degree by Mrs. Stovendale, they could not doubt that any kindness shewn to her would be gratefully acknowledged by that lady, and ultimately perhaps be the means of bringing about that intimacy with her to which they had long aspired.

Fidelia lost no time in addressing an explanatory letter to her; to which, as soon as possible, she received an answer, in which, after congratulating her on meeting with what she deemed such timely protection in the dilemma she was in, she strenuously advised her to remain contented where she then was till circumstances would permit their being together again: and here it may be necessary to observe, that on an admonition from Mrs.

Stovendale relative to the imprudence she conceived she had been guilty of shortly before their parting, Fidelia had so solemnly declared herself undeserving of the suspicion harboured against her, that, spite of the circumstances that dwelt upon her mind to confirm it, Mrs. Stovendale acquitted her of it, and in consequence bitterly regretted her having been prevailed on to send her away; but to bring her back with her was, she knew, out of the question, except she chose to subject herself to the imputation of credulity from Mr. Stovendale.

CHAPTER V.

"And do not seek to take your charge upon you,
To bear your griefs yourself, and leave me out."

THE mind of Fidelia had scarcely regained a little composure ere its agitation was renewed by the unexpected introduction of Albina to the residence of Mr. Bryerly; but the present was the agitation of pleasure—of pleasure at the sight of her earliest friend, and of gratitude and delight at having at length an opportunity of vindicating herself of all that she had been accused of to her. To do this she found no difficulty to the affectionately-attached and naturally-confiding Albina, and the renewal of their mutual confidence was a source of consolation to both—the oppressed and anxious heart of each was relieved by the unburthening its cares to the other, and many a bitter pang as-

suaged by the soothings of reciprocal affection.

But to the sorrows of each what an augmentation was the tidings of Mr. Stovendale's death! Albina grieved for it on Hastings's account; Fidelia, from the effect she was aware it was likely to produce on his mother. Both longed, though from different feelings, as may be surmised, to see him—but for some time in vain: at length Fidelia, unable any longer to restrain her anxiety to make minute inquiries concerning Mrs. Stovendale, made the letter which she had written her by him, but which he had delivered to her through the medium of Mr. Bryerly, a pretext for desiring an interview, and in the conversation that ensued subdued all his disinclination to avail himself of the hospitable invitation of Mr. Bryerly, by the disclosure of Albina's being under the same roof.

Yet in allowing himself to profit by this opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with her, he was aware he was

yielding to a dangerous indulgence; but to resist the only one that could now afford a moment's pleasure was beyond his power. The secret of his soul was soon betrayed; but, even if his attentions had been less unceasing, his looks would have disclosed it.

The discovery excited the most malignant feelings—the pride of the family was piqued that, after all, she should have been the only inducement for his becoming intimate in it, and the envy of the Miss Bryerlys excited by her having so evidently made a conquest they were ambitious of themselves.

The result was an ardent wish to get rid of her, which, united to his impatience for the realization of some of the views, at least, that had induced him to extend his protection to her, occasioned Mr. Bryerly at last to address her on the subject of writing to her friends relative to the cruel situation in which she had been left by her father, adding, that if she either had

not already done so, or the task was too painful, he would undertake it for her.

Friends!—alas! where were they? To the only person she had a right to look to—her brother—she had already written, imploring his advice and assistance; but receiving no answer, was almost induced to believe he had decided on disclaiming her.

Tears gushed from her; Mr. Bryerly became alarmed, and almost peremptorily called upon her to be explicit. She obeyed, and, by disclosing that she was not only merely the half-sister of Dundonald, but very little known to him, and that the connexion with the Fitzossory family was through his mother, not hers, annihilated all those sanguine expectations that had been entertained of something pleasant occurring from the attention shewn to her. Yes, it was very evident to him that her brother meant to cut the connexion, and that the Fitzossory family, guided by him, would entirely overlook her. How provoking, that he should have troubled him-

self about her! But he decided that she should not much longer remain an incumbrance on him: he would have had no hesitation in coming to an immediate explanation on the subject with her, but that he rather wished to preserve appearances a little.

But what this wish prevented his plainly doing, he determined on indirectly signifying, by immediately occasioning an alteration in the treatment she had hitherto experienced in his house. But, through the dexterous management of Fidelia, she was for some time prevented noticing, or rather feeling, this alteration; and Mr. Bryerly at last began to think he should be compelled to speak explicitly to her.—"Plague on her dulness of apprehension!" he exclaimed one day to his wife—"But no, 'tis not dulness—the girl is keen and shrewd enough—'tis cunning that makes her seem not to understand the hints we have so plainly given of wishing to get rid of her. But, curse me, if she does not

take them speedily, if I will not enlighten her understanding on the subject!"

"To be sure," feelingly assented Mrs. Bryerly. "But, had you been a little more cautious before you invited her—had you taken my advice——"

"Psha! don't bore me with nonsense now."

"Oh! very well, sir; I know my advice, like the prophecies of Cassandra, is disregarded; but perhaps, like them, it would be better if it were not so utterly despised."

The very next day afforded Mr. Bryerly an opportunity of carrying his kind and manly resolve into effect. A large dinner party was invited, amongst which was a purse-proud trader and his wife from the other side of Temple-bar, with their only daughter, a pert, forward, over-indulged child of eleven. By the dexterous management of Mr. and Mrs. Bryerly, it so happened that she and Albina were the last who entered the dining-parlour, and, not by any means considering her of an

age to give way to, instead of allowing her to take the only vacant chair that by this time remained at the table, she took it herself, and motioned to her to go to the side-table.

The young lady pouted; but, notwithstanding this, the parents might have overlooked the circumstance, had Albina been considered of consequence; but this the Bryerlys had previously taken care she should not, and their indignation was accordingly great at what they considered her assurance. Their angry glances so clearly evidenced this to Mr. Bryerly, that, fearful, if he did not resent it, they would take offence, and delighted besides at the opportunity it afforded of offering the insult he meditated, he hastily turned to her, and in an authoritative voice demanded what she meant—"Zounds, madam!" he exclaimed, "what do you mean by such conduct?—what do you mean by usurping the place of any guest of mine?"

The shocked, the affrighted girl looked at him for a moment, as if not compre-

hending what he said; then starting up, she rushed from the room. Fidelia and Hastings followed, notwithstanding the latter being placed in the seat of honour at the head of the table. They found her in a state of convulsive agitation. While one circled her in her arms, and the other pressed her hands in his, they tried to sooth her—but in vain.—"Let me go! let me go!" she wildly exclaimed, as if fearing their caresses were meant to detain her, and striving, as she spoke, to hide her face from them, as if even in her own eyes she had been degraded by the brutality she had met with.

But to make an effort to detain her where she had experienced such treatment, was not in the contemplation of Fidelia; yet her very soul trembled within her at the thought of what she might be exposed to, forlorn as she was, from being compelled to seek another asylum: nurtured in the bosom of idolizing tenderness—hitherto accustomed to have every want, every wish anticipated—how little

calculated, she conceived, was she to encounter what might be before her! Her tears gushed forth at the idea, and with redoubled tenderness she clasped her to her heart.

But, much as she suffered on her account, the feelings of Hastings were, if possible, more acute. Oh, how was his bitter destiny aggravated at the moment, by the power it deprived him of alleviating hers! Had his situation been different, had it been what his faithless fortune once promised, unhesitatingly would he have knelt at the feet of the fair mourner, and implored her to dismiss all further care from her bosom, by taking shelter in his from every future storm: but it must not be—forlorn, destitute himself, to additional misery must he drag her, should the dictates of passion be obeyed.

The first burst of indignant feeling over, where she was to go was then the consideration. After a little musing, she bethought her of the place where her father had died, and thither she decided on go-

ing, with a determination of immediately writing to her brother again; and, should no notice be taken of her letter, of making exertions to procure herself some situation.

Through the promptness of Fidelia she was quickly ready to depart; and a coach being sent for, she left Mr. Bryerly, attended by both her companions; for to allow her to depart by herself was not to be thought of by Fidelia. Conceiving, however, that she might be condemned for seeming to wish to give offence, when Mrs. Stovendale had recommended her to remain, she curbed her feelings sufficiently ere she stepped into the coach after Albina, to leave a message for Mr. and Mrs. Bryerly, intimating whither she was going, and hoping they would excuse her accompanying her friend without their permission.

Exertions she would not have been equal to for herself, strong solicitude for another now enabled her to make. On reaching their destination, she preceded Albina into the house, paved the way for

her admission, and, in short, acted more like a fond mother solicitous for the comfort of a darling child, than a being not older than the object of her strong anxiety.

The dejected Hastings did not leave them till he had seen them quietly seated in the temporary abode of Albina; he then most reluctantly, but as propriety urged, took his leave. Bending his steps to his solitary lodgings, the moment he entered them, a note was presented to him from Mr. Bryerly, expressive of surprise at his abrupt retiring from the party, and entreating his immediate return to it. With a feeling of indignation that flushed his face to a crimson, he tore it in pieces, and snatching up a pen, returned the following answer:—

"*To* —— *Bryerly, Esq.*

"SIR,

"That you should feel surprise at my quitting your table, and not re-

turning to it, I confess, occasions me still greater; for, good God! what must you suppose the feelings of the man to be, who could voluntarily return to a board whence he had seen a being, of all others the most interesting—a youthful, innocent, dejected female, driven by the grossest brutality?

"From having any further communication with a person capable of the outrage I witnessed this evening, of so unfeeling and degrading a violation of the laws of humanity and hospitality, I shrink, not merely with a sentiment of disgust, but absolute abhorrence. I remain,

"SIR,

"Your obedient servant,

"HASTINGS STOVENDALE."

Judging, as the mean mind ever does, of others by itself, Mr. Bryerly was not a little surprised as well as disconcerted by this letter, conceiving that selfish considerations would have induced Hastings

to restrain any indignation or resentment the recent affair might have excited in his mind. The degrading light in which he made him view himself was extremely unpleasant to his feelings; however, he soon strove to get the better of these, by reflecting, that what was so grating to him was the effusion of a hot-headed young man, and that, so far from injuring him by a representation of what had occurred to his mother, he probably would only obtain her gratitude for him, for trying to get rid of, and put out of his way, a person whom of course he concluded, from her want of fortune, she could not approve of his paying his addresses to. Not, however, to make matters worse, and destroy his chance of not being injured in the opinion of Mrs. Stovendale, he decided on doing nothing more to exasperate the feelings of Fidelia, not doubting that her representations to that lady would guide her a great deal with regard to her opinion of him; and accordingly, at her request to

be allowed to remain with her friend till she had heard from her brother, permitted her to do so.

In the meanwhile Hastings poured forth his tortured soul to Auberville—his bursting heart required vent, and to him he disclosed all that had recently occurred to add to its anguish, unwilling to be explicit with his mother, already too oppressed to need any augmentation of hers. After dispatching this, his only consolation was derived from calling on the fair friends, or rather hovering about their abode; for a feverish complaint, brought on by excessive agitation, soon precluded his seeing Albina.

During her illness, how fondly, how carefully, did Fidelia watch over her! She required great attendance, but the finances of neither allowing of additional expence, she took upon her the office of sole nurse. The fatigue she underwent was sometimes almost too much for her; but still, as she felt herself ready to sink beneath it, she

reanimated herself to new exertions by the reflection of what Albina would suffer should she lose her care.

Of her unremitting solicitude about her, Albina was not insensible; and while tears of gratitude would overflow her eyes for it—"Oh! how—how could such a heart as yours ever have been doubted?" she exclaimed.

"Thank God! thank God!" was the reply of Fidelia, "that it is given me to evince the sincerity of that heart to discharge in some degree the debt of gratitude I owe for the early care bestowed on my infancy—the implanting in my soul those principles that now reconcile and render me submissive to the destiny I seem born to! Oh, how poor any thing I can do in requital for such care, for the instructions that have impressed me with holy hope, and enable me still, amidst the very gloom of adversity, to feel comfort and consolation within my soul!"

What she was undergoing could not be entirely concealed from Hastings, and he

became alarmed on her account.—" Have you no fears," he demanded, one day that she descended to answer his minute inquiries after Albina, " about yourself?" observing the languor of her eyes and the sickly hue of her pale cheek; " do you not think you need a little of the care and solicitude your friend does?"

" Oh no!" she cried, striving to shake off the appearance of languor which she saw had alarmed him; " I am no garden-flower like her, reared with care and tenderness to be the pride of the gay parterre, but a mountain-plant, early accustomed to the ravings of the wild winds of heaven round my unsheltered head."

" Lovely, incomparable girl!" cried Hastings, seizing her hand, and pressing it with the most impassioned tenderness to his lips, " no wonder my mother loves you as she does. Oh, ere long, may the mountain-plant uprear its beauteous head, where genial suns and showers alone shed their kindly influence!"

But what a revolution was there in the

feelings of the friends, when, about a week after Hastings's letter to Ireland, one arrived from lord Fitzossory, acquainting her that the preceding day, for the first time, he had, through his grandson, colonel Grandison, been fully apprised of the unpleasant circumstances in which she had been left; that her brother was immediately expected at Rock Fort; and that, without loss of time, he desired she might prepare to join him there, as a person was about setting out for the purpose of attending her to Ireland. A handsome remittance was enclosed; and his lordship concluded with good wishes and assurances of kindness and protection.

But the joy of Albina at the change in her prospects was not without alloy. To be torn from her friend, and lose the occasional sight of Hastings—of him who had so nobly, so generously overlooked his own interests, in resentment of the outrage she had met, was not to be dwelt on without bitter sorrow and regret.

Whatever were their feelings at the approaching separation, they better curbed them; indeed, at times, all selfish considerations were forgotten by both, in the exquisite joy they experienced at having a being so truly dear and interesting to them rescued from further suffering.

But while they exulted at the circumstance, with what consternation and confusion did it fill the Bryerlys! The packet that brought the fair sufferer her cheering letter, brought also one to them from the earl, in which, after coldly thanking them for the temporary shelter they had afforded her, he begged, if any expence had been incurred from the circumstance, he might be informed of it.

It seemed evident to them, from the supercilious style of the letter, and the invitation that had so immediately followed their expulsion of Albina from their house, that some intimation of their conduct to her had been conveyed to his lordship, and that to allow her to part in enmity

with them would be a means of confirming the prejudice it must have excited in his mind against them.

"My God! how unfortunate," exclaimed Mrs. Bryerly, on the perusal of his letter, "that we did not wait a little longer, ere we manifested any impatience to get rid of her!"

"Unfortunate!" repeated Mr. Bryerly, traversing the room—"yes; but you took care at the time not to give a hint that you thought a little longer forbearance would be better."

"Lord, Mr. Bryerly, how can you speak in such a manner! Great use indeed, any hint from me to a man of your positive disposition! But this is always the way; if any thing goes wrong, I am sure to be blamed, though I have not near the influence over you that a weathercock has. I dare say, if the house was on fire, I should go near to be hanged, by your accusing me of being the cause. Instead of railing and raving in this manner, it would be better for you to try whether the mischief

that's done can be undone. I'll go to Miss Dundonald, if you like, and try what can be done."

"You!—oh yes! you are wonderfully clever in extricating one from a difficulty! —dexterous enough, I'll allow, in entangling one—but as to disentangling one, the less said on that subject the better."

"Well—but it's no matter—all I shall say is, that it needs the patience of Job to bear with such a captious temper. I protest, but that I am concerned in it myself, I would not, from what you have now said, trouble myself in the affair—you good-for-nothing man!"

"Well, well, scold as long as you please. But do you think Miss Dundonald such a fool as to be imposed upon by your long-deferred apology? If you really felt regret for what occurred, it must be evident to her you would not have put it off till now."

This representation was not sufficient, however, to deter Mrs. Bryerly; she had a good deal of confidence and high opinion

of her own cleverness, and both induced her to persist in her meditated plan. She accordingly repaired to Albina's, where, after giving utterance to the most extravagant congratulations and insincere expressions of regard, she came to the point, namely, an apology for the recent occurrence; protesting she would before have called on her for the purpose, but for a violent cold; and that, if she knew Mr. Bryerly as she did, she would not mind what he said, being, from rather an irritable temper, subject to sudden bursts of passion, when nothing was further from his heart than ill-nature or meaning to give offence.

Albina coldly bowed, and begged nothing more might be said on the subject.

"But how can I help dwelling on it," returned Mrs. Bryerly, "uncertain as I am whether you may not mention it elsewhere, to our great prejudice?"

The pale cheek of Albina kindled.—"No, madam," she said, "on that head you may rest satisfied. My pride is your

security—it would not permit me to disclose to any one that I was where I could have met with such an outrage."

This rebuke completely silenced Mrs. Bryerly; and she presently after took her leave, with the resignation of all hope of ever being able to renew her intimacy with Albina.

At the time expected, the female domestic deputed by lord Fitzossory to attend Albina to his mansion arrived, and Albina by this time being sufficiently convalescent to bear the fatigue of a journey, she lost no time in preparing for her departure. The parting scene between her and Fidelia, and the farewell interview with Hastings, we shall pass over. Immediately after her departure, the former returned to the Bryerlys, and Hastings to that attention to his affairs which the distraction of his mind about her had interrupted.

If possible, the pleasure of Fidelia at the altered situation of her friend was heightened, by knowing that it was to be

ascribed to the interference of Grandison; for we naturally exult and delight in every new proof we receive of the worth and nobleness of those we regard. Involuntarily he became their almost constant theme of conversation, Fidelia having no hesitation in speaking of him to Albina, as she would have had but for having long before been completely undeceived with regard to the nature of her sentiments for him.

But both still remained in profound ignorance of the connexion between him and Hastings, and of course of the connexion of the latter with the Fitzossory family; every being indeed he wished to be silent on a connexion that, where it should be acknowledged, appeared to be so unfeelingly, so arrogantly disclaimed. For a moment his resentful feelings were subdued, when he learned that it was to Grandison Albina was indebted for the kindness of lord Fitzossory; but when he reflected that, while thus interested about a comparative stranger, his nearest, dearest

ties were neglected, he knew not how to ascribe to any generous motive his interference about her.

CHAPTER VI.

" The lonely shepherd, on the mountain's side,
With patience waits the rosy opening day;
The mariner, at midnight's darksome tide,
With cheerful hope expects the morning ray."

Could Albina have tasted of the waters of Lethe, she might have been happy at this period; but, with such recollections, such reflections as pervaded her mind, that was impossible. True, she was comparatively easy on her own account; but the uncertainty she was in about the fate of the dear, the venerated beings who had reared her, prevented this consideration from having that effect upon her it otherwise might. To think that, at that very time, they might be tossing on the wild

waves of the vast Atlantic, or in a strang country, without comfort or assistance uncertain perhaps of ever returning t that where every hope and wish was centered, was a source of agony to her. And was it a being whose memory nature en joined her to love and respect that had exposed them to all this? It was a thought she was compelled to fly from; and, aware that our sorrows are not to be obtruded amidst strangers, she strove to compose and collect her agitated mind against her arrival at Rock Fort.

The earl received her with kindness, and Grandison with every demonstration of real pleasure. He said every thing that had a tendency to sooth and reanimate her—assured her he considered himself as a connexion, and that her giving him proofs of regarding him in a similar light would both flatter and delight him.

She found her brother arrived before her, and though she had no reason to think much of his regard for her, still the sight of a person she had a natural claim

upon was a pleasure to her. On involuntarily reproaching him for his silence, he assured her he had never received a letter from her, and that the unhappiness he had lately been under was considerably augmented by his ignorance respecting her.

She tried to hope and believe he was sincere in this assertion; but a doubt lingered, and in experiencing it she did not by any means wrong him, for her letters had in reality come to hand, but through a selfish policy he had decided on not noticing them, that thus all hope of assistance from him might at once be cut off. In his intended abandonment of her he saw, however, he could not persevere, from the notice which the Fitzossory family thought proper to take of her.

Besides those above mentioned, the party at Rock Fort consisted at present of the dowager countess De Bellemont, the sister of the earl, as already stated—her fashionable and coquettish daughter, lady Caroline Ayrcourt—a Miss Slaney, the daughter of a deceased and illustrious friend of the

general's, who, in consequence of being left nearly destitute (notwithstanding the high rank of her father), the general, who owed him many obligations, had gratefully taken under his care—a Miss Clinton, the orphan heiress of a deceased banker, whose wealth induced a pretty cousin of the earl's to overlook his low origin, and who, on his death, left his lordship sole guardian to his daughter—lord Castle Dermot—and, last, a Miss Pearce, a lady a little on the decline, whom, laying claim to be a half-sister of the earl's, he had, from her needing the assistance of a wealthy relative, allowed to take up her abode under his roof.

Lady Caroline and lord Castle Dermot are already known to our readers; it therefore only remains to introduce the others to their notice. The fixed residence of the dowager was in England, but she liked her present quarters too well to be in a hurry to change them. She was what is denominated a woman of the world, that

is, a person who, in attending to other matters, never loses sight of her own interest. With all his passions and prejudices, her brother had still many noble traits in his nature; but, except for her own immediate connexions, her ladyship had little thought or consideration for any one.

Miss Slaney was a fat fair-looking girl, with an apparently-eternal inclination to laughter, and a disposition to be easily imposed on and pleased; there were some, however, who pretended to say they discovered a slyness in her countenance, that convinced them the former was not so easy as might be at first supposed from casual observation; whether right, however, in their conjecture, or rather assertion, time was yet to determine.

Miss Clinton was pretty, but vain, and arrogated not a little to herself from the consequence she conceived she derived from her fortune. She was not yet of age, but, as soon as she was, purposed going over to England, where some of her deceased father's property lay. In the inte-

rim she indulged herself with all that it could procure her, and was not a little gratified by finding herself an object of general admiration.

This admiration occasioned the most malignant feelings in the bosom of lady Caroline; she envied her all that excited it—her youth, her beauty, and her fortune; and, to try to humble and mortify her, sometimes set off Miss Slaney in opposition to her. To her, therefore, Miss Slaney really owed obligation, since to her she was indebted for advantages she would not otherwise have received, since nothing could be less kind to her than the general conduct of lady Caroline when regulated by herself.

But Miss Clinton was neither to be humbled nor intimidated; she knew her own pretensions, and had both spirit and resolution to support them. In vain lady Caroline and her mother drew invidious comparisons between birth and fortune, and dwelt on the precedence that should

at all times be given to Miss Slaney from the former; the more they tried to humble her, the more she assumed, to their extreme surprise and mortification, as they conceived it would have been an easy matter to have humbled or intimidated a girl of her age, and brought up in what to them was comparative retirement.

But, notwithstanding appearances, all was not at peace in the bosom of the fair heiress. Dundonald had succeeded in ingratiating himself into her good graces, and the struggle this occasioned between love and ambition rendered her at times very unhappy. She aspired to a title, and the ruin that had overwhelmed his father did not tend to reconcile her to the idea of resigning her pretensions for him; yet to bring herself to resolve on giving him up she could not easily do.

After the death of his mother, the father of lord Fitzossory had married again; and on his decease, his widow, who was rather a young woman, gave her hand to a gentleman of the name of Pearce, by

whom she had a daughter, who, on the death of her parents, which happened much about the same time, being left in very unpleasant circumstances, was, on the explanation of these to the earl, to whom she chose to consider herself related, invited to take up her abode in his mansion. She was now, as already stated, a little on the decline—tall and stiff in her person, and cold, formal, and often supercilious, in her manner, with an extreme propensity to interfere in what did not concern her. From being connected, as she chose to conceive, with the Fitzossory family, she arrogated not a little to herself, never failing, wherever she thought this was not known, to make mention of it, by introducing the name of her mother the countess-dowager, as indeed, in one way or other, she was always trying to do.

Lady Caroline still persevered in encouraging the gallantries of lord Castle Dermot, but, fearful of their being no-

ticed at Rock Fort, from the total stop that such a circumstance would occasion being put to them, she proposed, in order to divert suspicion from her, his pretending to pay his addresses to Miss Slaney. From the diversion it promised to afford him, his lordship was prevailed on to consent; but not, however, till she had assured him that, whenever he found it convenient to break with her, she would furnish him with some plausible pretext for the purpose.

Accordingly he was soon set down as the admirer of the young lady, whose usual inclination to mirth did not seem lessened by the circumstance. But, simple as many people had before thought her, they did not by any means think her so simple as her manner now towards him manifested, seeming by it to conceive that the first intimation of his passion for her had given him a right to dictate to her, as on every occasion she was running up to him to know how she should act; thus

giving an eclat and publicity to his pretended attentions to her which he by no means desired.

The welcome which she had received from the earl and Grandison, Albina did not by any means meet with from the other inmates of the Castle; the younger ladies did not like the introduction of a person so attractive, and the old ladies deemed her too insignificant to be noticed, while lord Castle Dermot became almost savage with her, from not being able to extort from her the present address of Fidelia.

The day after her arrival, the earl had a long conference with her, in which he assured her both she and her brother might place every reliance on his friendship and kindness, as long as they acted agreeably to his wishes. One of the estates which her late father had purchased on speculation, and the title to which was now disputed, had been settled on them; but as the trustees would do nothing in defence of it, from knowing that, if reco-

vered, the creditors could derive no advantage from the circumstance, owing to the settlement alluded to, he proceeded to inform her that he had given instructions to his law agent to take up the business, and that he made but very little doubt of its being settled in a manner that would secure to them a handsome independence.

How cheering was this intimation to Albina!—how delightful to her to think that shortly perhaps it would be in her power to make amends to her beloved grandfather and grandmother for the injury done them by her father, by reinstating them in all their former happiness and comfort! Her gratitude to lord Fitzossory was what must be supposed, and the effect produced on her spirits by his conversation with her, enabled her a little to enjoy the gaiety surrounding her. But soon she felt a transient damp upon them by the departure of colonel Grandison, whose kind, whose soothing attentions had the effect of preventing her feeling the want of them from others.

As usual, the day after his departure a large party was assembled in the drawing-room to dinner. Amongst the guests were sir Phelim O'Leary (already mentioned) and his family, and counsellor Corney, the friend and confidant of Walter. The former, fond of rambling about, had come to the neighbouring town of D——, to pass a little time there; but the latter resided in the neighbourhood.

Soon after being seated at table, some one asking lady O'Leary how she liked D——, she declared she found it quite as odious as she did every other place she had tried in the kingdom, immediately commencing her favourite theme—the abuse of Ireland, protesting that nothing but the roguery of sir Phelim's tenants had prevented her being in England long before.

"So you rifle the hive and then forsake it! Now, is that fair, lady O'Leary?"

"Ah, my dear lord! don't let us renew our arguments on the old subject; any

thing is fair that prevents a person suffering martyrdom, by continuing in a place they cannot endure. Were you to reside any time in England, I am indubitably convinced your prejudice in favour of this unfortunate isle would vanish, and, instead of wishing to come back to it, you would detest it so much as never to desire to come back to it."

"A very sufficient reason then for not leaving it. I should hate and despise myself, if capable of conceiving an aversion to my native place."

"I protest, if one can derive greater advantages and enjoyments from a residence elsewhere, I don't see any reflection it can be upon one to do so; for what's the use of taste if we don't discriminate? and according to our discrimination, we must set a value upon things. However," added she, temporizing a little, for her ladyship could now and then take a little slide into the opinion of others, if she thought the one asserted by herself at the moment particularly calculated to offend,

"I believe I might, and should indeed be induced to remain more stationary here, but that policy dictates to sir Phelim the cultivation of a connexion he has formed with a certain political party in the other kingdom; led by it to believe that there is a likelihood of—but," putting up her hand to shade her face and laughing affectedly, "this is to be understood as spoken aside—his barbarous name, begging pardon of his godfathers and godmother, being merged in a title. Heavens! what a name! as my delightful friend Miss Donohue says, to have announced in a drawing-room! She protests upon her honour, that she never hears it that it does not conjure up to her view the horrid murdering chieftains, *alias* savages, of old Bryan Boru's time."

"Oh fie!" cried Corney, laughing, who was a great pretender to a kind of sly humour—"What an unpatriotic lady this Miss Donohue, to deprecate the heirs of her own lord!"

"Ay, 'tis by conduct of this kind—'tis

by either inveighing against, or turning into ridicule, every thing belonging to Ireland, that she has gradually lost her proud pre-eminence amongst nations. When strangers hear those who have been nurtured in her bosom, and battened on her soil, abusing her, 'tis natural for them to conclude she is every thing that is odious and despicable. But the bad policy of this will yet be perceived, when, deserted, and of course impoverished, she is unable, through such means, to furnish her unnatural children with the supplies their vanity and extravagance need elsewhere."

"Ay, so I told lady O'Leary," cried sir Phelim; "'tis just the same thing, I said, as if she began to rail at her daughters."

"Yes, or as if one exposed the tricks of a vicious horse wanted to be got rid of," said lord Castle Dermot. "Curse me if I care whether Ireland was swallowed up in the sea—the Red Sea, if near enough; but, damme, as I belong to it, if I would let any man abuse it; by gad, I'd wing him like a partridge!"

"He! he!" tittered lady O'Leary—"'tis well then I am of the sex that's privileged."

"And is it only because you belong to Ireland that you stand up in defence of it?" asked Corney. "That argues no self-love, to be sure!"

"Oh, damme if I care what it argues: I have already said I'll never let any man abuse the country, as I am considered belonging to it; but as to saying I like it better than any other, that's a different thing. There's no variety here—nothing on the grand, the magnificent scale that there is abroad."

"True," assented lord Fitzossory, with bitterness; "but why? because the national consequence of the kingdom has been bartered away, and with it the means of keeping up that splendour and magnificence it could once shew has been lost."

"Perhaps so," said lord Castle Dermot, carelessly. "If so, 'tis a pity that those who did as you say should not, as a pu-

nishment, be compelled to live entirely in it. But, curse me if it wouldn't be too bad, that those who didn't share in the crime should share in the purgatory."

"What a happy way your lordship has of expressing yourself!" said Corney, "or improving on an observation!"

"Oh, damme, I make no set speeches—I leave that to gentlemen of your profession—declaiming against crimes by which they live. But, *à-propos*, my dear fellow—I wish you joy of your forensic honour!—Faith, you are getting on famously!—never read any thing finer in my life than that opening speech of yours on that late *crim. con.* affair. But is it true, my dear fellow, that the lady, instead of thanking you for your pathetic and extenuating representation of her sufferings from the cruel gallant, stopped her carriage one day in the street, in order to have an opportunity of giving you a box on the ear for it?"

"Oh, my lord!" laughing, "I'm not sufficiently a man of fashion to boast of the favours of the ladies."

"A devilish favour, indeed, that to boast of!—Well, certainly those affairs are very amusing; the newspapers might languish for me, if it was not now and then for their appearance in them. Before I sit down attentively to peruse one, I always glance over it; and if I see no list of atrocious crimes, a breach of promise of marriage, or *crim. con.* cases, throw it aside; for, as to births, deaths, or marriages, curse me if I care who comes into the world, or who goes out of it! and as to parliamentary debates, Westminster meetings, and Smithfield returns, they are devilish bores."

"Then, instead of praying against the deadly sins, your lordship would rather pray for their commission, in order to be amused? Well, I am sure I don't know what you would do if an amendment were to take place in morals, except, on the plan of madame Genlis for her pupil, you were to have one written on purpose for yourself."

"My God, then, my lord," said Miss Pearce, who was extremely precise both

in her notions as well as manners, " is it possible your lordship can be amused by the sins of the world? I am sure I never read of any thing bad, particularly these cases," and she looked down affectedly, " that I don't quite shudder."

" What cases, ma'am?" asked lady Caroline, who sometimes delighted in teazing her.

" Lord, lady Caroline, you quite astonish me by your question!—What an alteration in manners!—Oh, if it was ever imagined that I even thought of such matters, how my mother the countess dowager, and my governess madame La Porte, would have stared!"

" Oh Lord, ma'am, you speak of antediluvian days! Stiff manners and affected innocence went out with stiff stays and treble ruffles. No one thinks it any harm or indecorum now to speak of things as they occur."

" It would be much better, however, if they did," observed an elderly lady of the name of Frankland; " for those who

speak freely are but too apt, in time, to act freely. I dislike affectation, of all things; but, of the two, I prefer the affectation of modesty to the appearance of none at all—that unnatural air of boldness now assumed by many, under the erroneous idea of freedom of manners being a proof of honesty. It accords with the advice of Hamlet to assume a virtue, though you have it not."

"But, Lord, ma'am, one can't shut their eyes and ears; and 'tis usual to speak of what one reads or sees."

"If we knew how to restrain our curiosity, we should much oftener remain strangers to what 'tis better not to know. We are seldom so situated as to be compelled to read or witness what is unpleasing; and, by-the-bye, nothing can be a greater proof of disrespect than for a gentleman to start certain subjects before a lady."

"Hum!" emphatically cried lord Castle Dermot—"a cut at me, as they say in the play, by Jove!".

To give a turn to the conversation, which was now becoming too serious for his amusement, Corney inquired whether the ladies had heard of the marquis of Inverary being shortly expected in the neighbourhood?

No, was the reply, accompanied by inquiries concerning him from those who were interested in the matter.

Corney, who was a person that abounded in anecdote and what might be termed gossiping chat, and had heard a good deal of his lordship while in London, answered these, describing him as a very accomplished young nobleman, of immense possessions in the Highlands, and who was now coming over on a tour of pleasure.

"A second Syntax, perhaps," said one of the Miss O'Learys.

"He is certainly coming over in search of beauties," said Frankland.

"Portable ones, I hope," cried the second sister, laughing.

"I can't exactly say—all I can is, that, from what I have heard, he has taste

and gallantry sufficient to do justice to such."

"Delightful! There's nothing more captivating to the imagination than the idea of a Highland chieftain," said Miss Clinton.

"The marquis of Inverary!—oh, now I recollect meeting him in my recent visit to London," observed lord Castle Dermot; "and a devilish handsome fellow he is—but a little quizzical, I understand. They say the beautiful lady B—— would positively have thrown herself into his arms, had he given her any encouragement."

"God bless my soul! how lightly people speak of breaking the commandments nowadays!" exclaimed Miss Pearce. "And does your lordship call him quizzical on that account?"

"Do I!—curse me, yes, to be sure, and a fool beside. If indeed he had been obliged to encumber himself with her for life, that would have altered the case; but as, by the clause in the divorce bill, one is not now compelled to make what is called

the *amende honorable*, I think a man a fool who doesn't profit by the kindness of a fine woman."

"How generous, how noble your sentiments!" said Corney. "I know not which to admire most, their liberality, or the frankness with which they are avowed."

"Really!—Well, I am vastly happy I excite so much admiration. Perhaps the caution with which you conceal yours will, at some time or other, not excite less wonder."

This was a remark that awakened a consciousness in the breast of Corney, that made him blush to the eyes; he had adroitness, however, to conceal his confusion, and forced himself to laugh at the observation.

"My God!" again exclaimed Miss Pearce—"But I am sure, my lord, you are not always serious in what you say?"

"Why not, ma'am?" returned his lordship, with unparalleled impudence. "I never jest but when I make love to an old woman."

This answer had the effect of silencing poor Miss Pearce for some time, from the confusion it excited, owing to the titter it gave rise to amongst the younger part of the company.

Lady De Bellemont soon after made a motion for withdrawing; most of the gentlemen soon followed: the elder part of the company sat down to cards, but, after tea, the younger part commenced dancing in another room.

By the dexterous management of lady Caroline and Miss Clinton, who both viewed her with envy, and accordingly wished to have her mortified, Albina was left unengaged. Very little concerned at the circumstance, she sat leaning on a sofa, quietly looking on, when lord Castle Dermot, who had first sat down to cards, in a sudden fit of ill-humour started up from the table and stalked into the room, where, throwing himself on a seat, he sat sulkily inattentive to all around him. Some one at length observing him, asked why he did not dance?

" Why!" he repeated—" Why how the devil should I, when there's no one to dance with?"

" Oh insensible!" exclaimed Corney, glancing at Albina, who was certainly the handsomest girl in the room.

" Oh, I beg pardon," said his lordship, " for overlooking the lady." Then rising, but as if it was a fatigue, and stalking to Albina—" May I hope, ma'am, after this, you'll honour me with your hand?"

" Oh, with the greatest pleasure, my lord," replied Albina, good-humouredly, determined, by her manner, no one should triumph at her expence, by letting it be seen she was piqued or mortified in the least by the neglect she met with. " I declare, I love dancing so much, I would accept any partner almost, however disagreeable, rather than not stand up."

" Thank you, ma'am," said his lordship, angrily. " You are polite, I am sure."

" Dear me!" with affected simplicity, " what have I said?"

" Why, that I need not place to any

very flattering account the honour you have now done me."

"Dear me!" in the same tone in which she had just spoken, "how unconsciously sometimes people speak the truth! I hope your lordship is not offended?"

"Offended!—oh no, ma'am," pulling up his collar in some agitation—"no, damn it, I am not easily put out of sorts with myself."

"Indeed, so I thought."

"Thank you, ma'am; you improve."

"Indeed!—I am vastly glad, I am sure, your lordship thinks so, because I know your taste and judgment to be so superlative; and, in return, you may rely on it, whenever I think the same of you, you shall know it."

"Vastly obliging!—But I don't think I shall trouble you."

"Why indeed," a little pointedly, "I am rather inclined to think not."

Far, however, from continuing to feel offended, this raillery had the effect of re-

storing lord Castle Dermot to all his usual careless good-humour; and his attentions soon began to be so particular to his fair partner, as to awaken the jealousy of lady Caroline, and occasion her interference. Miss Slaney wished to speak to him, she said: he would have declined, however, from the agreeable manner in which he was engaged, hearing what the lady had to say to him at present, but for an expressive look from lady Caroline, and most reluctantly he resigned the hand of his fair partner.

Her being thus able to baffle their malice occasioned no little mortification to those who wished to mortify her; but the gay and happy manners that enabled her to do so were forced; her uncertainty on more than one interesting subject prevented the real restoration of her spirits, and made her, in consequence, wish as much as possible to be alone; this, however, she soon found she could seldom be, from the continual engagements that were

taking place, either at home or abroad, without incurring the imputation of singularity or affectation.

CHAPTER VII.

" Then, in despite of broad-eyed watchful day,
I would into thy bosom pour my thoughts—
But, ah! I will not."

SPRING was by this time advanced, and in a solitary ramble now and then through the beautiful walks of Rock Fort, now decked with the variegated buds and blossoms of the vernal season, Albina was sometimes soothed into a state of pensive tranquillity. Of those whom her thoughts involuntarily dwelt on, we may suppose Hastings one. What claims indeed had he not given himself, by his conduct towards her, to her recollection!—what base ingratitude indeed would she not be guilty of, could she forget him, after the sym-

pathy, the generous resentment he had evinced on her account! In vain she wished to learn what the result of the latter had been. Fidelia could give her no information on the subject, from the total cessation of his intercourse with the Miss Bryerlys.

Anxious in the extreme to learn something respecting him, she summoned courage to ask, after dinner one day, when none but the family party were present, whether such a regiment (mentioning the one he belonged to) had yet quitted ——?"

"Why do you ask?" demanded lord Castle Dermot, to whom, more than to any other person, the question seemed addressed. "Do you know any one in it?"

After hesitating a little, Albina, with a blush, replied she did—"A gentleman of the name of Stovendale."

"The earl caught at the name, and started.—"What! the son of a gentleman lately deceased?" he asked.

Albina, by a bow, replied in the affirmative.

"The brother of Rodolph, I protest!" exclaimed lady Caroline. "Dear me! I should like to see him. Pray is he handsome, Miss Dundonald?"

"Who, ma'am?" asked Albina.

"Why, the brother of colonel Grandison. Don't you know that he and captain Stovendale are brothers?"

"Not till this present minute, madam."

"Well, tell me, is he handsome?"

"I should presume, ma'am," now interrupted lord Fitzossory, with a sternness that made Albina start, "on many accounts, it can be of very little consequence to you to know what he is; and knowing what you do, I confess I feel surprise at the want of respect your ladyship has evinced for me by the question you have asked.—As to you, Miss Dundonald, did I imagine you as well informed on the present subject as lady Caroline Ayrcourt, I could not forgive your allusion to the person just mentioned. I now acquaint you, madam, for your guidance in future,

that his is a name absolutely prohibited in this house; that I allow of no interference in any thing that concerns me; and that, should you again attempt to make him the theme of discourse, or choose to consider him in the light of an acquaintance, you must cease to consider me in that of a friend; and take this along with you, that, in disobliging and offending me, 'tis not yourself alone you injure, but also your brother; for, at the moment of deciding to receive you, I also decided, if either incurred my resentment, to shake both off, as the ungrateful stock of a man in reality unconnected with me." So saying, he arose, and pushing away his chair with violence, quitted the room.

For a moment almost after, every one, Walter excepted (who was seldom disconcerted by what did not immediately concern himself), seemed confounded by his lordship's violence.—"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Miss Pearce, who, from political motives, wished, as he was absent, to seem to take part with lady Caroline—"I am

sure people need to weigh their words well here before they speak."

"Perhaps it would be better if they always did," returned lady De Bellemont, in a tone of haughty coolness that proved her much offended.

"Dear me! how shocking his lordship's violence!" said Miss Clinton, but with an air that proved she cared not in the least about it. "Well, positively I'll endeavour to make sure of not marrying a passionate man, for I have not nerves for such scenes as the recent."

"I hope, Miss Dundonald, this will be a caution to you in future," said Fergus, enraged beyond expression at what he had met with from the earl through her means. "The less young ladies speak about strangers, the better."

The affrighted and bewildered Albina could constrain herself no longer—she gushed into tears, and fled to her room for refuge. How bitter were the reflections that accompanied her there! Was it then on a being who had betrayed his

considering her as no connexion, that she solely depended for protection and any chance of future support—a being who, on the least caprice, the least irritation, could shake her off as easily as the wintry wind does the last lingering leaves of autumn from the despoiled tree!—But this was not all: should chance throw her and Hastings in the way of each other again, she must not dare to renew her acquaintance with him—dare to give him any proof of his being remembered with gratitude and esteem by her. How was it that she had remained in ignorance till now of the connexion so recently discovered?—how was it that it remained unacknowledged by either brother? Her curiosity on this head was gratified by Miss Pearce, who, in trying to learn how she and Hastings had become acquainted, betrayed the whole of the Fitzossory history.

It seemed to Albina, from what she heard, that neither brother was to blame—that a cruel policy had alone kept them

asunder; and that, if once introduced to each other, they could not fail of being attached. Oh! what happiness to her to bring about this introduction! But, after what had occurred, to attempt such a thing was not to be thought of.

The fond hope she had indulged of shortly meeting with Hastings again, was now relinquished; what she had desired, she now absolutely dreaded, from the torturing feelings she was aware it would doom her to—the feelings she must experience from being compelled to shun, as a stranger, a person who had such claims to her gratitude and regard.

It may readily be presumed she did not recover her tranquillity; the semblance of it, however, she was forced to assume, by the watchfulness of the alarmed Fergus, who feared her appearing unhappy might be construed into a resentment against his lordship that might offend him.

About a fortnight after this *brouillerie*, as the family were assembled one morning

to breakfast, military music was heard approaching; a servant was immediately dispatched to inquire about it, and returned with word that it was a regiment lately arrived at D——, that had come down to fire at a target in the park.

The earl, with his wonted politeness and hospitality, declared he would immediately go out to introduce himself to the officers, and invite them to breakfast after the firing was over; he accordingly sallied forth, accompanied by the rest of the party.

But what was the confusion, the consternation of Albina, on discovering that this was the regiment to which Hastings belonged!—She glanced at the earl, but nothing in his countenance gave any indication of his recollecting the circumstance, if indeed aware of it. This, however, was not the case either with lord Castle Dermot or Fergus, and the looks of the latter terrified her by their angry significance. All she could do to tranquillize herself was to hope that Hastings had not yet

returned from England: fearfully she looked about, and not seeing him, at last began to think it was as she wished.

The earl introduced him to the colonel, and by the colonel the other officers were presented to the ladies. For some time they were very agreeably amused by the various evolutions of the men, and the performance of the band: they were collected near it, listening to some admired airs, when an officer, turning to one standing by Albina, demanded if he knew what had become of Stovendale?

"Not I, faith," replied the other; "and, now I recollect, I missed him soon after the putting up of the target."

Albina started at the name, but instantly endeavoured to check her emotion, from perceiving that not only Fergus but the earl were both close to her, and had also heard it. Oh, how did her heart pant at the moment! how did she pray she might have no further cause for agitation!—But she was destined to experience still greater.

Suddenly she beheld Hastings approaching. Conscious of being watched, apprised of the consequences that would result from her recognition of him as an acquaintance, she instantly averted her head, nor ventured to look round again for some time; when she did, he was gone—gone, she was convinced, impressed with the most injurious ideas of her. She had banished him, then, from her—banished him, with a conviction of her being insincere, ungrateful, forgetful of the kindest attentions, the most unreturnable obligations. And was she to allow him to rest under this cruel belief?—was there no way of retrieving herself in his opinion—of informing him of the cruel necessity that fettered her will—of the fate of others depending on her acquiescence to the arbitrary prohibition laid upon her?—alas! she saw none; and her very soul was in agony at the thought of the light in which he must view her.

The firing at length over, the party proceeded to the house. Mechanically Albina

moved along, careless at the moment of all that was passing; not so her companions —they appeared highly delighted with the gallant attentions and gay badinage of the officers.

"But where is Stovendale?" was again the sudden exclamation of one of the latter.

"Faith! I don't know," was again the reply of the officer who had before answered a similar interrogation, and who still kept his station by Albina; "on hearing we were invited to breakfast by the earl, he said he had business elsewhere; but he would be ready to join at the first sound of the bugle."

He knew then, it seemed to her, from this, that there he would not be voluntarily admitted as a guest; but this knowledge did not by any means assure Albina that he would form a right surmise as to the cause of her conduct towards him; he could scarcely, she thought, imagine that the prejudice of the earl against him would be carried to the length of restricting the acquaintance of another person with him.

The officers did not depart without due acknowledgments for the reception they had met at Rock Fort, or being invited to repeat their visit to it whenever agreeable; the earl feeling pleasure in yielding to his natural urbanity and hospitality, since relieved by the conduct of Hastings from all fears of being intruded on by him.

The military party had no sooner taken leave, than he mentioned the circumstance of his belonging to the regiment, in order, he said, that the ladies, by being timely apprised of it, might be on their guard against an introduction to him—"Not from any personal prejudice," he added, "to the young man, but entirely the family reasons that long since induced me to decide against any correspondence with his family.—As to you, Miss Dundonald," turning to her, "I thank you for the attention you paid to my wishes on the subject; my eye was on you, and I marked the decided manner in which you repelled the young man's attempt for a renewal of your acquaintance."

Albina bowed—she could not speak at the moment, she could not force herself to say she was happy at conduct having met his approbation that was torturing her heart to think of. The decided manner in which she repelled his attempt to speak to her—oh! how agonizingly forcible were these words! in what a light did they make her regard herself!

For a few days she continued almost the image of despair; the idea then occurred of trying to excuse herself in the eyes of Hastings, and thus relieving herself from the anguish she was enduring. In pursuance of it, she decided on no longer avoiding going out, as for some days past she had done; the ladies were in the habit of frequently going to D——, and thither she resolved on now accompanying them, conceiving that there was a chance of encountering him, in a way that would afford her an opportunity of giving the explanation she desired.

Accordingly, the next time the carriage was ordered there, she took a place in it,

with lady Caroline and Miss Clinton, unattended, to her great joy, either by Fergus or any other of the gentlemen that day, owing to there being a race on the strand. They drove to a milliner's on the Grand Parade. Albina alighted, and her companions were about following her, when the marchioness of Curragh's carriage driving by to a neighbouring hotel, they drew back, and, telling her they would be with her presently, ordered the coachman to follow thither, wishing to pay their compliments to her ladyship. Albina, who had really some purchases to make, advanced into the shop, but had scarcely done so, when she started at beholding Hastings, half-seated on the counter, trying on some gloves. From the manner in which she caught him regarding her, it was evident he had been watching her from the moment of her alighting; but, the instant their eyes encountered, his were withdrawn, and he began some laughing remark to the young girl who was attending him with the gloves.

Trembling with agitation, Albina moved on to an inner room where the millinery was displayed, and, sinking on a seat, faintly mentioned the articles she wanted to see. While the woman was selecting them, she tried to compose herself—but in vain—the opportunity she had so earnestly wished for of coming to an explanation with Hastings had occurred, but she knew not how, or rather wanted courage, to make use of it; offended as he so evidently was, he might repel any effort for the purpose; and if he did, the motive for this effort unexplained, what misconstruction might he not put on it?

Undecided how to act, convinced that, if she did not avail herself of the present opportunity for explanation, she should regret, when too late, not having done so, yet still shrinking from the measure, she at length determined on a few lines to him, conceiving there was a much greater chance of avoiding what she dreaded by addressing him in this way, than attempting it verbally; accordingly, tearing a leaf

from a pocket-book she had in her ridicule, she hastily wrote the following lines with her pencil:—

"*To Captain Stovendale.*

"In acting as I now do, I may be accused of indecorum; but I prefer incurring the risk, rather than being accused by captain Stovendale of forgetfulness of the kind attentions received from him, or by myself, of any slight or disrespect to the brother of a person I owe such obligations to as to colonel Grandison. To account for the incident of the other day, I have only, I trust, to inform captain Stovendale that I am at present under the absolute control of lord Fitzossory—a circumstance which he was not perhaps previously apprised of, but which will, I trust, fully explain what I wish to be understood by him. "A. D."

While twisting it up, her eyes involuntarily uplifted, she beheld herself the ob-

ject of his fixed attention: no time was to be lost—the person in attendance was fortunately called away at the moment by some other customers, and she accordingly held it up to him.

He started, and for a minute looked irresolute, or rather as if he knew not how to believe what he saw; then advancing into the parlour—"Me, madam?" he said —"Am I mistaken? or did you do me the honour of inviting me here?"

Albina was unable to speak—she almost feared she was wrong in what she had done; but it was now too late to draw back. In silence she gave him her billet, and then, to avoid his looks, pretended to busy herself in examining the things displayed before her.

The woman of the shop now returned, and immediately Hastings retired, and the next minute quitted the shop. Albina knew not what to think, and her uncertainty augmented the previous colour on her cheek to a feverish glow. Should her

apology, her explanation, be treated with disdain—But the idea was not endurable. She had no time to dwell on it: lady Caroline and Miss Clinton speedily returned, accompanied by several of the officers, and of course she was compelled to try and rouse herself from her abstraction.

While endeavouring to appear amused by some of the gay badinage addressed to her, Hastings again entered. Involuntarily, on perceiving him, her eyes were averted, and for a minute she had not courage to steal a glance. When at length she summoned courage for the purpose, oh! how was she reassured by the expressive look of gratitude she caught from him! She had succeeded then in acquitting herself in his opinion, and a weight of misery was removed from her heart by the conviction; but any further communication than by looks was just at the precise moment prevented by the watchfulness of lady Caroline and Miss Clinton, who no sooner understood who he was,

than, after staring at him till they absolutely embarrassed him, they turned their attention upon her.

At length they prepared to depart. Albina was following to the carriage, handed by an officer, when Hastings starting forward, stooped down, and saying, "You have dropt something, ma'am," slipped a folded paper into her hand; and then drawing back, but not without a stifled sigh of regret at being prevented paying attention to her, allowed her to proceed.

With what eagerness did she hasten to her chamber the moment of reaching Rock Fort, for the purpose of perusing her billet, which ran as follows:—

"*To Miss Dundonald.*

"How impossible to express my gratitude for the goodness, the condescension of Miss Dundonald, in explaining to me the circumstance that occasioned the misery of the other day! To find that it was caused by the inveteracy of cruel pre-

judices, and not any wish on the part of Miss Dundonald to deprive me of the hope of being allowed to cultivate her esteem, compensates me for it. With the liveliest sentiments of esteem, gratitude, and respect, I remain her eternally devoted

" H. S."

In having so happily accomplished an explanation so essential to her tranquillity, it may readily be supposed the heart of Albina was lightened of an oppressive load; still, however, she had to lament the cruel decision of lord Fitzossory. The officers of his regiment became intimate at Rock Fort, but he no more appeared with them at it; and even on occasions when military evolutions might have furnished him with a pretext, he was still absent; so that at last Albina was inclined to believe he had obtained leave of absence again. Her heart sunk at the surmise; for, uncertain as every thing still remained relative to her future destination, she conceived it but too likely, if

this were the case, they might not meet again.

Had no hope of a partial restoration of fortune been indulged, reason would have suggested perhaps that it were better this should be the case; but, indulging such a hope as she did from the representations of lord Fitzossory, she had secretly wished for opportunities of each becoming better known to the other.

The painful restraint she was compelled to impose upon herself in company, made her seek, as much as possible, to be by herself: her greatest indulgence was derived from rambling about the delightful domain of Rock Fort, rich in varied scenery, and commanding the most enchanting views. As she was walking one day at a distance from the mansion, a rustling amidst some adjoining thickets made her suddenly pause, and the next instant she beheld Hastings before her.

CHAPTER VIII.

" And therefore those may think my 'haviour light;
But trust me, gentlemen, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be strange."

THINKING what Albina had done, her surprise at this encounter was excessive, and such as, united to other powerful sensations at the moment, took almost from her the power of replying to his ardent inquiries after her health, and animated expressions of pleasure at this unexpected meeting.—" Unexpected indeed!" repeated Albina, at length a little recovering herself, and proceeding to inform him of his having obtained leave of absence again.

" No," he said; after having it so lately, he should have found that a difficult matter. But not taking any great interest, he added, in the gaieties of D——, he had exchanged with an officer stationed at a village in the vicinity.

On learning the name—" You must be fond of solitude indeed to go to that," said Albina; " for it is in truth what may be styled a miserable place."

" I don't pretend to be an anchorite in my disposition," he returned; " but there are circumstances at times that make us act contrary to our real propensities."

Albina guessed what he alluded to—unwillingness to be in the way of encountering the Fitzossory family, from the embarrassing feelings she conceived he must experience, owing to his consciousness of the claims he had to their notice, from the connexion subsisting between them, and the injurious inferences that might be drawn from their oversight of him where that connexion was known. —" I believe," hesitating a little, " I may venture to say I understand you," said Albina; " but I trust those circumstances you have just alluded to will not long remain in force. Your brother is shortly expected back to the Castle again, and 'tis impossible, I think, for him to know you

are in his neighbourhood, without such an intercourse taking place between you as must, for the future, insure you every proper attention here."

"No, no," exclaimed Hastings, warmly, "I entertain no such hope; and excuse me, dear Miss Dundonald, but let me entreat you never to mention the grandson of lord Fitzossory to me again by the title of brother; he has disclaimed, he has renounced," he continued, with added heat and increasing agitation, "that title, and never, never will I again allow myself to consider him as bearing it. He has repelled, he has rejected my affection, and I must be abject in soul," with a bitter smile he added, "if I could keep alive the idea of a connexion thus renounced at one side."

"Good God! to what unhappy mistake is all this owing?" said Albina; "for to something of the kind I am persuaded it is to be imputed, so truly amiable does your brother appear to be. Pardon me, but your relationship is so uppermost in

my thoughts, that I cannot forbear giving him that title—a title I trust and believe you will yet deem him deserving of."

"The warm-hearted and generous almost ever judge of others by themselves; but I have proof, irrefragable proof, of colonel Grandison himself wishing to disclaim it—such proof as has at once wrung and irritated every feeling.—But let us change the subject," he added—"a subject that shakes, that agitates my very soul;" and as he spoke he slightly passed his handkerchief across his brow.

Albina could not persevere in a subject she saw thus agitating to him: he spoke of the gratitude he owed for the condescending explanation she had given him. —"I should have considered it due," she replied, "to any one—though not to all, perhaps," with a blush and a smile, she added, "should I have been so anxious to make it." She then, to check perhaps the expression of the feelings she saw this blush and smile had excited, entered into

a detail of all that had occurred since their parting in England.

With the most earnest attention he listened to her, and evidently appeared only restrained by delicate apprehensiveness from giving utterance to the emotions it excited.

But at length it was necessary they should separate: what exactly passed at the moment we cannot say, but certain t is, that after this Albina did not feel surprise again when in her usual walks she sometimes met him.

Led by various circumstances to consider each other in a light that propelled to mutual confidence, the minutes flew swiftly while conversing, and every succeeding meeting served but to render each still more interesting to the other. Those felicitous moments, however, were not enjoyed by Hastings without a thousand alloying pangs; lost to all hope of independence, the imprudence of seeking them was but too sensibly felt; yet, spite of this conviction, he persisted in doing so.

The feelings of his tortured heart, however, could not always be restrained.—"Oh God!" he suddenly exclaimed one day, letting fall the hand of Albina, which, pointing out a prospect to him, he had gently seized and carried to his lips, "what wretchedness am I entailing on myself by the indulgence I am now enjoying!—But, though aware of this, I cannot—cannot bring myself to forego it—no, though convinced that, the more I know, the more I must admire—that each succeeding interview tends but to increase a passion fortune renders hopeless. Yes, yes," passionately throwing himself at the feet of Albina, and for a minute leaning his throbbing head against her, "love and despair must for ever be the inmates of my bosom; the splendid hopes of my youth are blasted—the proud expectations I was taught to cherish are destroyed; and God is my witness, that even if I would not drag the being I most love on earth into wretchedness with me—" His

voice became stifled—he could not allude to the bitter reverse in his situation without feelings being excited that shook his very frame. Suddenly he turned away from Albina, but without rising, and dashed himself against the ground.

Terrified, affected beyond description, she called upon him, she conjured him to rise; but he appeared to hear her not: the fatal imprudence of his father, the disdain of his brother, the state of hopeless lingering misery to which he seemed doomed, with his incapability of bearing slights, his keen, his trembling susceptibility—all pressed on his brain at the moment, and wrought him up almost to frenzy.—" Stovendale, for pity's sake! for God's sake! recollect yourself," still more earnestly urged the affrighted Albina: but still he spoke not. She knelt down beside him—" Oh, Stovendale!" she exclaimed, " if to be assured of my regard, if to be assured the hopes I am permitted to indulge of returning fortune, are rendered doubly delightful from the permis-

sion their realization will give to evince the sincerity of that regard, will sooth or alleviate your feelings, receive that assurance now. I pledge—I bind myself to you, should fortune prove propitious, should circumstances so turn out as to acquit us of imprudence, both in our own eyes and the eyes of the world, for yielding to our mutual sentiments for each other."

The conclusion of this scene must, we presume, be superfluous to dwell on—the ecstacy of the grateful Stovendale, the rapture of his impassioned heart, or the delight of the generous Albina, at having the power of imparting happiness to that heart. The meetings to which each had heretofore given the air of chance were now no longer ascribed to it; the only enjoyment of each at the present period was derived from them. But, exquisite as was this, it was often interrupted by apprehension, particularly on the side of Albina, of any premature suspicion or discovery taking place; still, however, she knew not

how to refuse to Hastings the gratification of seeing her.

But soon there was a new source of inquietude: the arrival of the eagerly-expected marquis of Inverary was at length announced. The earl, with the other gentlemen at Rock Fort, immediately hastened to pay their compliments to him, and cards were speedily issued for several entertainments; amongst these was a splendid ball by the bishop's lady, at the palace in D——, and all became bustle and preparation.

Albina would gladly have been excused taking any part in what was going forward, but, on her hinting a wish to this effect to Fergus, in a furious voice he told her not to make herself ridiculous by an affectation of more feeling and sensibility than any one would give her credit for.

To have allowed her to follow the bent of her inclination would not by any means have been displeasing either to his mistress or the other fair ones at the Castle, as they all regarded her with an eye of envy: Miss

Clinton, however, was the one that least feared being rivalled by her, so arrogant was the opinion she entertained of her own charms, and such were the preparations she had made for giving them all the aids of dress on this occasion. Absolutely aiming at the conquest of the marquis, notwithstanding the real partiality she felt for Fergus, and the encouragement she had given him, nothing could exceed her impatience for the ball at the palace, which was to introduce her to him. A rumour of the splendid dresses she had got down from Dublin for the occasion got abroad; but in vain was she solicited even for a description of these—in vain was her woman besieged by the milliners and mantuamakers of D—— for the same purpose; both remained inexorable. —"Though indeed I believe, mem," said Chatterly, a pert English girl, brought over expressly for her, as she was dressing her on this important evening, "one might have ventured to have shewn your grand dresses; for, except lady Caroline,

none could have thought of getting any thing like them. Lord, mem! what a poor rubbishing set they are in D——! Why, I am assured, mem, there's not a person of real quality in it. But indeed, mem, asking your pardon for the remark, this here Hireland is a sad place."

"Oh indeed, Chatterly, you needn't ask my pardon for abusing it—you are welcome to do so as much as you like; for no one can hate or despise it more than I do. I assure you, the moment I am my own mistress, which will now be pretty soon, should I not be married before, which, *entre nous*," with a self-approving smile as she adjusted a ringlet at the glass, "is not improbable, I shall leave it for England."

"Will you indeed, mem?" cried Chatterly, in an ecstacy; "well, really your ladyship makes me almost jump for joy to hear you say so; for, to be sure, though you are all generosity, I believe I should still break my poor 'art if I thought I was to live in this here outlandish place,

where, to be sure, one can't hunderstand half that is said, and the rest is such bad Henglish, 'tis pretty much the same thing. Oh, mem! 'tis there you'll see life, as my lady Bellair used to say, that I lived with before I came over to you—'tis there you'll have proper 'omage done to your charms—no such paltry doings there as here. But lauk, mem! how should tradespeople's wives know how to do things stylishly? And to be sure there are none better in D——, with all their talking about first people and first circles. Lauk-a-mercy! if it doesn't make one sick to hear such rubbish talk of distinctions! 'Tis a pity, to be sure, mem, that a real lady of fortin, like you, should be obligated to mix with such a set. But, to be sure, mem, 'tis a comfort to think that will be but for a short time now. When you go to London, then, mem, you'll find yourself in your proper speere; then, mem, you'll shine in your own helement—you'll be a belle where, as my lady Bellair says, there

are beaux worth looking at. Oh, mem! 'tis enough to tossicate one's very senses! —the bustle, and the hurry, and the grandeur of London—the routes, and the hoperas, and the pick-nicks—with the masquerades, and the galas, and the feets, and the reviews, and the *déjeûnés*—with my lord mayor's balls and the other city shows —and the fine races at Epsom and Ascot —and Vauxhall, and all the winter and summer theatres! Dear me, mem! after all these, if one isn't tempted to laugh at the aiming of the poor folks of D——, with their three sedans in the place for the accommodation of the numerous fashionables, and their assembly-room, lit up with tin sconces and farthing candles! —enough to make a Russian sick with the smell of the tallow—I am sure it did me, when I went there one night to see the dancing, because you were there, mem. Lord, how I did stare! when I asked for the wax-lights (which I am sure a head-servant in London wouldn't give a party without having), and they told me they

never thought of nothing of that kind here!"

Miss Clinton laughed, and assented to all her flippant and artful attendant said, losing in her manner to her that haughtiness that generally distinguished it to others. But Chatterly possessed in an eminent degree the talent of making people pleased with themselves; she affected to start back in transport on the completion of her lady's toilet, protesting she wished she could render herself invisible, in order to listen to the remarks and observations, the envy and admiration, she was convinced she would excite.

Delighted with herself, and of course anticipating every thing that was delightful from the evening, Miss Clinton left her chamber. The dress which had been so coveted to be seen, consisted of a robe of the finest net, trimmed with the richest lace, festooned up with light fancy flowers, and worn over a slip of silver tissue, which, through its thin texture, had something of the undulating sparkling of dew in the

sunbeams. Rubies and pearls, interset, composed the ornaments for her neck and hair; and altogether, her complexion improved by art, and her countenance radiant with delightful expectation, she looked very dazzling and attractive.

While Mrs. Chatterly was administering to her fair mistress a proper quantity of that delicious essence in which she delighted, Miss Peggy Macbride, engaged as an attendant on lady Caroline since her coming to the country, was trying her abilities in the same way.—"Sorrow may care!" she cried, as she was putting on her robe—"they needn't have been so churlish—Miss Clinton and her maid—about the fine things that came down from Dublin; for I'm sure and sartain a beautifuller dress than this one needn't desire to clap their eyes on."

"Why, I hope you don't mean to insinuate, Peggy, that I wanted to see Miss Clinton's things, in order to take pattern by them?"

"Me, ma'am! lord, I never had such a

thought in my head!—you, a real born lady, to take pattern in any thing by her, the start-up!—no, ma'am; I only meant, if you had, they needn't have been so close, since, spite of them, you have handsome things yourself; and any how, 'tis not the finest dress, but the handsomest person that's most thought of; so I leave it to be guessed who will be most looked at to-night. But, for all that, I'll be up to madam Chatterly yet, grudging one a glimpse of her lady's things, as if one could have swallowed them up, as the cow did Tom Thumb. But the truth is, she is as cross-grained as she's pert; and, God knows, that's saying enough; disparaging, too, every thing she sees—tossing up her nose, as if she wanted to sniff the moon, at what her betters are contint with. Och, then, 'tis enough to vex the patience of a saint to hear the likes of her abusing every thing, with her 'oh lauk! we have no such thing in England;' and, 'deary me! we have no idea of such a thing there;' and 'in England we do so and so.'—'Ah

then, Mrs. Chatterly,' says the housekeeper the other evening to her, 'quiet and softly—don't be bothering us always about England; you are in Ireland now, and if you don't like it, there's the broad sea that brought you over to take you back again, and welcome."

"Served her quite right," condescended to observe lady Caroline.

"Yes, ma'am; so I am sure your ladyship must think. And then, ma'am, she's the greatest cheat in the world at cards; so mean too—always pretending, when she loses, she has no change about her. For my part, I'd scorn to be like her; I never sit down without having plenty of fivepennies and tenpennies about me.—But if she won't get it from Miss Clinton to-night, when she finds that other people know how to set off and make their ladies look ten times better than herself."

"Upon my word, you are a very odd kind of girl, Peggy, I believe: I am now beginning to know you better than I did at first. But why don't you take that

heap off I threw out of my drawers to-day?"

"What! all the things upon that chair, does your ladyship mean—the pink dress and all? Well, I'm sure I am more beholden to your ladyship than I can mintion; for that pink dress will give me an opportunity of grigging Mrs. Chatterly, because she says 'tis so becoming to a clear complexion."

Next to herself, lady Caroline was anxious about Miss Slaney to-night, from her ardent wish to mortify the arrogant heiress; conceiving that, if the marquis admired her at all, her birth thrown into the scale must make it preponderate in her favour.

Whether she was pleased with the appearance of the young lady on this occasion we cannot say, but certainly the young lady was so herself: running up to lord Castle Dermot with her usual Audrey-like air, the moment she entered the drawing-room, she twirled herself round, and asked him how he liked her

dress?—"Do you think it too short, or too long?" she asked; "for, you know, I think you have a right to give an opinion."

Rather disconcerted by this public appeal, from seeing the eyes of the earl on him, he tried to laugh it off, but it would not do; and at last—"Oh, curse me!" he exclaimed, "I think it like the wearer—quite the thing!"

"But there's another thing I want to ask you," she cried, laying her hand on his arm. "Should there be waltzing to-night, do you object?"

"What! to your waltzing?—No, you may waltz with the devil," he was on the point of answering, but checked himself, to say—"with the whole room, if you like it."

"Oh, how good-natured!" cried Miss Slaney, in a tone of affected delight, and with something like a skip expressive of the same feeling, as she bounded across the room to shew her dress to the dowager, or rather ask her opinion also of it.

By the time the party reached the pa-

lace it was crowded, all the little-great folks of D—— being invited on this occasion, the families of consequence in the neighbourhood being too few, even with the addition of the military, to form a full assembly, and the bishop besides not choosing to be accused of invidious distinctions: but, as little as the ladies of his family, did he like associating with the gentry of D——, not from the actual want of any real consequence amongst them, but the pert arrogance and stupid illiberality by which they were distinguished. Without having one person amongst them entitled to precedence, they were eternally talking of the first people, and, in their stupid way, drawing distinctions that were absolutely ludicrous. Accustomed to this, the respective parties were not so much struck by the circumstance as strangers, who were continually hearing, when they came, of first people, and first people naturally inquired for these people; and could not help laughing when they heard of the wife of an

attorney looking down upon the wife of an attorney, because in not quite so handsome a house as herself; and the lady of the son of a tailor excluding from her parties the family of a tailor, because the father was still in business. No matter about beauty, genius, or merit—if belonging to the second class, they were sure to be overlooked by the first; just as if, like the descendants of Brahma, they were afraid of losing their cast, if they forgot for a moment the distinctions that divided them.

Lady Caroline, pursuant to her good-natured intention of doing all she could to vex and mortify Miss Clinton this evening, separated herself, together with her mother and Miss Slaney, from her, the moment of entering the ball-room. Miss Clinton, however, was too elated by the flattering expectations she was indulging to heed this pointed conduct: as a thing of course, she concluded the marquis, who was introduced to her, as well as to the other ladies of his party, by lord Fitz-

ossory, would open the ball with the bishop's eldest daughter; but of not being herself secured by him for the next set, ere he commenced the first, she had scarcely a doubt, from the high opinion she this night entertained of her charms. With this persuasion on her mind, she could not avoid a feeling of mortification when she saw him obey the signal for taking out Miss ———, without doing so; but it might be owing to his hurry in obeying the call for opening the ball—yes, assuredly it was; and no doubt the first opportunity that again occurred for engaging her, he would avail himself of it.

She was led out by the jealous and alarmed Fergus, too perfectly aware of what was passing in her mind not to feel it difficult to bridle the indignation her coquetry and intended trifling with him merited; but he saw it was only by dexterous management there was any certain chance of securing a prize, now more than ever desirable, from the reverse in his fortune; and he accordingly decided, as long

as that chance remained, to suppress the feelings she excited.

In the course of the dance, more than once she stood by the marquis; still, however, he did not make the expected application; but still she could not bring herself to imagine it was not his intention; and in this idea was confirmed, when, on the set being over, she saw him following to the form to which she was conducted, and heard him immediately after say to a gentleman—"Is she not lovely?" That the term could be applied to any one but herself, she had not an idea, and in consequence, with what she meant should be an appearance of beautiful modesty, looked down, and began playing with her fan; then timidly, as she meant it should seem, raising her eyes and catching his smiling ones, again bashfully looked down, but not without perceiving him making a movement from the gentleman with whom he had been conversing. But not to engage her did he leave him; the other set was about commencing, and passing her, she

saw him the next instant leading out Albina.

She then was the object of attraction—she then was the person that had excited his admiration! But how, all lovely and attractive as Albina was, could this, it may be asked, excite her surprise?—how indeed! but that she had chosen to consider the unassuming manner and unostentatious appearance of Albina as calculated rather to prevent than obtain notice.—But not from real taste and discernment—glare and glitter could not attract an eye like the marquis's, early accustomed to all that wealth could present to the view; but elegant simplicity had at once the effect. In Albina he saw all the native charms he admired; she verified indeed the poet's remark, that "loveliness needs not the foreign aid of ornament, but is, when unadorned, adorned the most."—He found her what her modest dress and mild air bespoke—gentle, unassuming, yet intelligent; aiming at nothing, her manners were completely natural; and the

gay and handsome Inverary soon began to think his heart in greater danger than it had ever before been.

The disappointment of Miss Clinton was scarcely endurable. After the expectations she had indulged—worse, after letting those expectations, through her arrogant and anticipating vanity, be known—to be thus slighted, overlooked, was not endurable; the malicious triumph which she hoped to have obtained at the expence of others, she now saw enjoyed at hers. The significant looks, the smothered titterings, which her too-evident mortification occasioned, were not lost upon her, and she pettishly wished herself, at the moment, any where but where she was. Had any thing been wanting to render her humour worse, it would have been the affectedly-pleasant remarks of lady O'Leary, who, in delight at her chagrin, or rather the cause of it, almost lost all sense of her own mortification at the total disregard of the marquis to the Misses O'Leary, though all most studiously

adorned for conquest. Having, by dint of perseverance, made her way to her little pouting friend, as she styled her to some others of the party, for the good-natured purpose of making them notice her mortification, in case they had previously overlooked it—"So the marquis has given the apple," she cried. "Who could have thought of Miss Dundonald being the goddess on this occasion?"

"Lord, ma'am! how fond your ladyship is of speaking in metaphor!" sulkily returned Miss Clinton. "The fact is, I suppose his lordship cared very little whom he danced with in an assembly like this, where there is scarce a choice."

"'Pon honour," said her ladyship, without seeming to notice this remark, "if I were in her place, I should quite fear that you slighted girls," half glancing round her, "would contrive some plot against me."

"Slighted, ma'am!" repeated Miss Clinton, turning on her with eyes flashing with rage and scorn—"I don't know who you

mean by the term slighted, or rather your application of it indiscriminately."

"Oh, well—no matter, my dear," said her ladyship, carelessly. "But is this exquisite dress the one you got down for the occasion?—'Tis absolutely beauteous; and you look so divinely in it, that—well, it's no matter, I shall only say, I am surprised;" and with a significant toss of her head she began fanning herself, as if under some flutter of spirits.

Miss Clinton, with a peevish and indignant "pish!" turned from her, and would immediately have made her escape, but that a press from an adjoining apartment rendered it impossible at the moment.

In proportion to her mortification was the exultation of Fergus; he carefully guarded, however, against betraying his having any insight into what was passing in her mind; and so adroitly, so skilfully played his part on this occasion, as at last to succeed in re-establishing himself completely in her good graces, and obtaining a more condescending intimation of this

from her than he had before been able to do. But a doting lover cannot perhaps find a more propitious moment for pleading his cause with a coquettish mistress than when her vanity has been humbled, since attentions that have a tendency to restore her to the exalted opinion she previously entertained of her charms naturally dispose her to listen to him: Fergus was an adept in the art of flattery, and, besides, so handsome, so fashionable, and so generally admired, that wounded vanity could not but be soothed and gratified by his assiduities.

As she became reconciled to her recent disappointment, the pain of it was still farther lessened by the idea of lady Caroline having experienced a similar one. Her rage for admiration was not unknown to her, neither her wish on every occasion, but particularly on this evening, to set up Miss Slaney in opposition to her, and with joy she reflected that she had neither obtained any particular notice herself, nor

yet for her *protegée*, from the marquis.—Since doomed to experience what she did, it was some consolation that it was the sister of the man that she was again almost tempted to think seriously of, that had been preferred to her, and not those she detested.

As she surmised, lady Caroline was indeed mortified by the inattention of the marquis to her, and her vain efforts to throw her into the shade behind Miss Slaney. She however better struggled with her feelings, both from a dread of exposing herself to censure, and a fear of exciting the jealousy of lord Castle Dermot, by letting him see she was anxious for the admiration of any person but himself.

As to Miss Slaney, she seemed, as usual, to have neither plan nor design that could expose her to any thing unpleasant. But, while she seemed exempt herself from mortification, she inflicted it on others, by the manner in which she continually interrupted any thing like conversation

between lady Caroline and lord Castle Dermot; still seeming, whenever his lordship approached the former, to think it was for the purpose of seeking her. But, provoked as they were with her for this conduct, it was not at present convenient that she should be undeceived with regard to his pretended passion for her, since, if she were, he would not have the plausible pretext he now had for attaching himself almost exclusively to the society of her ladyship.

CHAPTER IX.

" For now I stand as one upon a rock,
Environ'd with a wilderness of sea,
Who marks the waxing tide grow wave by wave,
Expecting ever when some envious surge
Will in his brinish bowels swallow him."

THE marquis was at present on a visit at the palace; the next morning, accompanied by the bishop's son, he rode out to

breakfast at Rock Fort, and there renewed all that particularity to Albina that had excited so much envy and observation the preceding night. Immediately after breakfast, carriages and horses were ordered for the party, and they all proceeded with him to some curious places in the neighbourhood.

Albina would greatly have enjoyed a thing of the kind, but for obtrusive reflection. Hastings, solitary and dejected, precluded all the enjoyments of society by the cruel and ungenerous conduct of lord Fitzossory, was uppermost in her thoughts, still checking every rising inclination to cheerfulness; but the semblance of it she was still forced to wear, for, more than ever, she now saw herself an object of attention to Fergus, and the consciousness within her breast made her endeavour, as much as possible, to conceal from him what was passing there.

But her efforts to appear otherwise than she really was would probably have proved ineffectual, had she been aware that the

anxiety with which he now watched her was owing to the thoughts and hopes the attentions of the marquis to her had inspired. The consequence into which she was suddenly elevated in his eyes by these attentions, made him do ample justice to her attractions; and from these he could not help imagining that the marquis might be induced to think seriously of her. His heart ambitiously swelled at the surmise, and, to bring about what was so desirable, he determined on leaving nothing undone.

Now that she had resigned all hopes of attracting him herself, Miss Clinton wished Albina's conquest of the marquis confirmed, both because she saw it vexed and disappointed lady Caroline, and because she conceived it was a circumstance from which she might yet derive consequence herself; Fergus daily entangled her still more; and she now scarcely wished to break with him.

Albina could not but perceive that the marquis was particular to her, but she perceived it without an idea of his having

any serious aim in his attention: the great disproportion in their fortunes precluded all apprehension of the kind. But when, at length, to what may be termed commonplace gallantry, an air of tenderness succeeded—when, on one side, she heard rallying hints of the conquest she had made, and at another received counsel not to lose, by any folly, the chance that had thus occurred for settling herself splendidly in life, she began to get alarmed, and gradually to alter in her manner towards him.

But the marquis was not easily to be repelled. Though he certainly decided, from pride, on not making a positive proposal, except certain of being accepted, succeeding interviews but served to confirm the impression made on him at first; the more intimate he became with her, the more amiable, the more captivating he found her; and, from the complete entanglement of his heart, he tried to hope and believe that the sudden alteration in her manner was occasioned more by invo-

luntary coyness than any wish to repulse his passion.

This was a flattering hope the anxious and exasperated Fergus could not entertain: he had previously suspected her being attached to Hastings, and her conduct to the marquis now confirmed this suspicion. His rage knew no bounds. To be disappointed of his hopes of being connected with the marquis (so desirable, both from his high rank and interest), was not sufficient; but to have that disappointment aggravated, by knowing it was occasioned by sentiments that, if discovered by lord Fitzossory, could not fail of being attended with the most injurious consequences! Unhesitatingly he took her to task, reproaching her in the bitterest manner for her folly, her madness, in encouraging these sentiments, after the intimation received from the earl; and concluded by vehemently protesting, if she did not immediately promise to give up all further thoughts of Hastings, and extend every encouragement that could

be desired to the marquis, he would directly seek the former, for the purpose of demanding satisfaction from him, for his baseness in laying himself out to gain her affections without the concurrence of her friends.

Albina tried to bear up against his threats and reproaches, but this subdued her. Catching him by the arm, as he was on the point of turning away to carry it into effect, as he declared, she fell on her knees, and assured him, if he would only stop, she was ready to promise what he required—ready to promise to hold no further correspondence with Hastings.

"And to give encouragement to the marquis?" he demanded—"That encouragement, 'tis evident to all, he only wants, to make a positive proposal to you."

Albina hesitated.—"No," she at length said, rising from her suppliant posture, "nothing shall prevail on me to act against my sense of right: I will not impose upon a noble and generous heart in the base manner you desire. If the marquis ho-

nours me indeed as you say, an attachment so disinterested merits the sincerest return, and that return not being in my power to make for it, I will not attempt to profit by it."

Fergus tried, by threats and arguments, to shake this resolve—but in vain; and he at length desisted, fearful of provoking her too far should he longer persist, and also from a hope that, as he had succeeded so far as to make her relinquish any farther correspondence with Hastings, he might ultimately succeed in all else he wished: precluded from receiving farther attentions from one lover, those of another might gradually become acceptable; pride and vanity must, he conceived, too, have some sway in her heart, and gradually lead her to what he wished.

Albina was certainly neither a stranger nor indifferent to the advantages of fortune, but not all that rank or opulence could offer to her acceptance could tempt her to falsify her promise to Hastings;

and, terrifying as was the violence of Fergus to her, still would she have braved it, by being explicit with the marquis, had he afforded her an opportunity by any direct declaration; but so long as he refrained from this, so long she could do nothing more than try to give him an insight into her real setiments, by avoiding his attentions as much as possible.

So evident was it soon to all, that a little alteration in her manner to him was all that was wanting to bring the marquis to her feet, that Fergus, losing all patience, became exasperated to a degree of tyranny against her. But this perhaps may be deemed excusable, when it is mentioned that Miss Clinton, ambitious of greater consequence, positively declared to him that she would never become his, except his sister *first* became marchioness of Inverary.

This declaration had the effect, as already hinted, of subjecting the unfortunate Albina to still greater persecution; not a word, not a look, but what was watched,

nor could she move without a spy upon her steps. To soften, therefore, as she wished, the present cessation of all intercourse between them to Hastings, was out of her power—all she could do was to address a line to him, entreating him not to let appearances make against her.

The entreaty was unnecessary; he well knew, from the rumours that reached his ears, how to account for the sudden interruption their correspondence had sustained.

That her friends should exert their influence to try and prevent whatever had a tendency to hinder her acceptance of the splendid establishment now offered her, he could not wonder; and when he reflected on the uncertainty of the prospects of each, he almost thought he should not regret that influence being successful; but when, immediately after, he thought of another enjoying the smiles that, like genial sunshine, cheered his very soul—another revelling in the warm affections of the glowing heart to which his was entwined—he

felt this was a disinterestedness he was not equal to.

Without friends, without society, without any thing either to alleviate or divert his thoughts, how wretched, how lonely were his moments at this period! If ever he could have thought with bitterness on the memory of his father, it would have been now, when, through his fatal misconduct, all was agony and gloomy incertitude. Mechanically he roamed about, often so abstracted as to be scarcely sensible whither he wandered, but still too often as if instinctively he found himself within the prohibited precincts of Rock Fort, amidst those waving oaks and grassy vales, where, of old, had been the dwellings of kings, and where so lately he had enjoyed the smiles, the converse of her he loved—no more, perhaps, to do so. In unutterable agitation he still paused at the slightest sound, under the hope of seeing her; but he heard not her soft and timid step—he saw her not approaching in

the light of beauty. As he wandered in the immediate vicinity of his home, he could not help at times thinking of Grandison—thinking of him with all the bitterness of resentment—resentment aggravated by the conviction, from all he heard, that his conduct towards him was not the result of any natural, any constitutional coldness of heart, but of premeditated unkindness: his generous benevolence was the cotter's animated theme; his urbanity, his liberality, that of the more refined; his voice was music, his smile all sweetness. He was noble, he was feeling, then —to one, one only, was he cold and unkind.

But soon his tortured heart had additional cause for anxiety: a long interval had elapsed without his hearing from his mother, and he began to be seriously alarmed about her. In a frame of mind that almost drove him to despair, he continued rambling about one evening, till, towards its decline, he found himself amidst the rocks contiguous to the Castle.

A full-orbed moon, rising high over the world of waters, gave a picture of tranquillity and beauty to his view that involuntarily arrested his steps; not a cloud intercepted its pure light, not a breath whispered through the cliffs; the murmur of the waves breaking at their base was the only sound that met the listening ear, save that, at times, Hastings fancied he heard the deep vibrations of a harp from the Castle.

As he lingered, he heard approaching footsteps: he turned with quickness, and beheld Auberville. Both started at this unexpected meeting and recognition.—"What! you in this part of the country!" Hastings exclaimed, as he sprang forward to shake hands with him. "I little imagined this, from the date of your last letter. But," and he spoke with a kind of jealous quickness, "you visit here, perhaps?"

"I do," Auberville replied.

"And—you know colonel Grandison, then?"

Again was the answer in the affirmative.

"Long, intimately, perhaps?"

"Yes."

"And why," demanded Hastings, with involuntary warmth and a flushing cheek, "why conceal this from me, when our relationship was mentioned before you?"

"Because I feared the knowledge of my being his acquaintance might preclude me from being allowed to consider myself your friend."

"No," said Hastings, after a transient pause, in much emotion—"no," he said, reproachfully, "I am not so selfish, so contracted, as to require my friend to hate the man that injures me. And yet, after all, I will be candid, because the knowledge you allude to might, in the first instance, have had the effect of preventing an intimacy from which I have derived such consolation." He then waved the subject, aware it was one that he could not dwell on with composure; and of consequence, many questions he might otherwise have asked were suppressed.

As they proceeded from the spot, Auberville said he was on the very point of seeking him when they met, for the purpose of getting him to accompany him to a village about a mile off, where he then was, and where there was a gentleman he wished most particularly to introduce him to.

In another frame of mind, and Hastings might have felt curious to know on what account; but now he was in that desponding, dejected state, that made him feel heartless, reckless about every thing. Accordingly, without an inquiry on the subject, he merely excused himself from accompanying Auberville, as solicited, to his friend, declaring he was then busied in making preparations for an immediate departure to England, not doubting that, should his intense anxiety about his mother not be relieved by a letter the next day, he should obtain leave of absence for the purpose.

The place where he was quartered was in a contrary direction to the village where

Auberville was; accordingly they soon separated, as Hastings had some miles to go; and Auberville did not wish to be long absent from his friend, whom he mentioned as a stranger in the place.

In spite of himself, Hastings could not help musing with unpleasant sensations on the discovery he had made of an intimacy existing between Grandison and Auberville: his confidence, his reliance on his friendship, were shaken by the circumstance; it seemed to him that, if he truly regarded one, he could not truly regard the other; and his tortured heart felt an additional pang from the idea of yet perhaps losing the consolation derived from his sympathy.

A night of restless agitation was succeeded by a morning of increased unhappiness; again was he disappointed of hearing from his mother, and in consequence, pursuant to his previous resolution, he proceeded without farther delay to the commanding officer, to solicit a short leave of absence. This, as he had conceived, on

stating his reasons for the request, he did not find any difficulty in procuring. He was hurrying back to make the requisite arrangements for his departure that night by the packet, when he again encountered Auberville; of course, he mentioned to him what had occurred. On hearing which, Auberville said he also had business in England, and proposed their being of one party. Hastings could of course make no objection; and accordingly joining the two friends, about the time it was necessary to depart, at the village where they were, they all repaired together to the packet.

General Stormont, to whom he was now introduced, he understood to have recently arrived from India, where he had long been in the Company's service. He was a fine soldierly-looking man—not young, as may be supposed from what has just been stated, but still retaining all the vigour and animation of youth, and evidently possessing much keenness and discernment.

During the passage, Hastings was saved the necessity of any exertions painful to

him; but this was no longer the case on quitting the packet, his companions, without exactly saying whither they were going, leaving the place where they landed in the same coach with him.

It is here requisite to mention that his mother, in her last letter to him, had stated that, owing to an unhappy reverse in the situation of the family with whom she then was, it was necessary she should change her abode; and that accordingly she proposed removing to the house of her friend, Mrs. Orwell, in Wiltshire, a lady with whom she had been long intimate.

There being no one in the carriage but the party just mentioned, there was no restraint on their conversation; but in this Hastings could not long continue to take a part—the anxiety he was enduring was too intolerable to permit him, and, pleading a violent headache, he leant back in a corner of the coach, with closed eyes. The other gentlemen kept up the ball between them. At length Auberville, who

had never appeared in such spirits before, suddenly turning to Hastings, slapped him on the shoulder, exclaiming—" But, that's true, my dear fellow, I have not yet asked you how far you are about penetrating into the bowels of the land?"

Hastings languidly informed him.

" To Mrs. Orwell's!" he repeated after him. " You're in luck then, at least if the newspapers are to be believed: for this month past they have been filled with pompous details of the entertainments given in honour of the coming of age of the young heir of the family. The daughters are represented as handsome; so, as I also am going to her neighbourhood, I must get you, Stovendale, to introduce me."

" My stay, I believe, will be very short," returned Hastings, in the same tone in which he had just before spoken.

" Oh, very well—if you won't, the general will; for I think, general, with the ' pish!' you gave yesterday on looking over the account of Mrs. Orwell's splen-

did attempts to astonish the natives, something like an intimation of knowing the lady escaped you."

"Yes, and that's the reason I'll shun her. Smother me in the black hole if I wouldn't do any thing rather than encounter her forced smiles and mawkish sentiments! There's so much parade, so much ostentation, too, in the house, that one would suppose they had a Chinese to regulate the ceremonies. If I never disliked this till the other day, I should have been made to do so then. Near Bath, in my way to Bristol, to embark for your emerald isle, an accident befel my carriage; it happened near a stately mansion, which, on inquiring, I learned belonged to a person of the name of Grubwell, once well known to me, and who, from being nobody, had contrived to get on to be somebody. Well, wishing to see the little man, and how he bore his altered situation, I repaired to his mansion; and, having recalled myself to his recollection, told him what had happened, and my in-

tention of stopping till the next day with him. But, instead of the request I expected to follow, not to put myself to any trouble, I was told, on his seeing me throw myself on a sofa, as I meant to be perfectly at my ease, that I would have plenty of time to change my dress, as Mrs. Grubwell (the daughter of a deceased tallow-chandler, and as lank and as stiff as if cast in one of her father's moulds) never allowed it to be served before seven, and had always a select party at it—a select party of her own choosing. Oh *Ciel!* an emphatic and involuntary shrug marked what I thought at the observation."

"Well, and the party?" said Auberville.

"Oh delectable!—consisting of half a dozen country prigs, and an equal number of tattling gossips, fluttering in all the finery of bad taste, and whose cursed fuss about precedence rendered a mawkish dinner of two courses, where all was show and glitter, without one substantial thing on the table (the master and mistress of

the mansion being a miserable and incongruous compound of avarice and ostentation), still more uncomfortable; and the torrent of their impertinent clack would just have been as easily stopped as a mill-dam. At length we got rid of our belles; and though a summons soon came to tea, I sturdily resisted it, till I had laid a bottle or two of excellent Burgundy under requisition, to make amends for my bad dinner, to the great annoyance of mine host, who, I soon discovered, was the very reverse of a Petruchio. Our tardy obedience to it occasioned a most terrific frown from the fair lady of the house, on our entrance to the drawing-room, and some facetious raillery from her companions.—'Oh, you sad creatures!' exclaimed a captivating virgin of forty-five, as she gigglingly expanded a fan two inches in length before her amiable visage: 'I protest, for your evident reluctance to join us, you deserve to be sent to Coventry.'—'I wote against that,' said a lady Rounceval; 'for I know,

if they were, you would be for having us follow directly, and I'm not in a humour for travelling to-night.'—'Ah, you scandalous creature!' cried the other, tapping her on the shoulder—'But no one minds what you say.'—'No, we are pretty much alike in that respect,' said the other, as she drew to a card-table.—'If gentlemen are not attentive to the wishes of the ladies, 'tis their own loss,' said the delectable Mrs. Grubwell, rising with an air she meant should be commanding; then abruptly turning to me—'I presume, colonel, you play? We have been waiting for you for this some time to make up a party at speculation.'—'Speculation! oh, my dear ma'am,' I replied, 'that's a game I never play at, for fear I should not be as successful at it as some folks;' and I could not forbear giving an oblique glance at my friend Grubwell, as, with a light shining full on his dumpling visage, he stood displaying the masterly performances of an itinerant artist, paid, like a house-painter, by the inch, not

the piece, and in which there are so many duplicates and triplicates of himself and the *ci-devant* Miss Dip, that one would think the whole were done in a copying-machine."

"You are a little satirical, general," said Auberville, laughing.

"Oh, not I!" replied the other, but with a laugh of consciousness that belied the assertion; "and, if I was in this instance, is not upstart arrogance fair game for ridicule?"

"Certainly; and, without being absolutely ill-natured, many, I believe, have been provoked to exercise its lash by arrogant and ill-founded pretensions. A person must be very illiberal to despise a man because he happens to be the founder of his own fortune; but if he presumes on this fortune to act with insolence or scorn, the circumstance is perhaps naturally reverted to."

"To be sure; I, for my part, always take care to make such fungous gentry

know themselves; my blood as naturally rises at the sight of upstart insolence as the thermometer does at fine weather."

"But how was it that a man of such little soul, such little talent, as you depicture this Mr. Grubwell, got on?"

"Why, faith, I believe, like sir Pertinax Macsycophant, by booing and booing to those who had the power to serve him. But, don't mistake me," he cried with quickness, as if suddenly recollecting himself—"'tis the duty of every man to try and advance his fortune. If, therefore, there was nothing else to lessen him but that, I should deem him respectable; for, upon my word, upon my soul, I think there is something savage in the pride that will not own an obligation."

"So do I, and so do you. Only get yourself made prime minister, general, and see how obsequious I'll be at your levee!"

"There's a medium," said the general, as if they had been arguing the point. "I no more like the worldly effrontery you'll sometimes meet with, than I do uncon-

querable pride—not the happy assurance ascribed to our brothers at the other side of the Tweed. And, *à-propos*, I'll tell you an instance of this I met the other day."

Auberville nodded.

"Well, you must know, returning from Hertfordshire, where I had been to pay a visit, by some means or other my name became known to a young Scotch lad (in the stagecoach in which I chose to travel on this occasion), with a visage as sharp as the wits of his countrymen, and who, from the moment he knew who I was, seemed lost in a brown study. The next morning, as I was dressing, I saw, in the glass at which I was standing, my man, to my great surprise, ushering my late fellow-traveller, Mr. Sawney, into the room.—'Hey-day!' I exclaimed, turning round, 'what's procured me the honour of this call? or how the deuce did you find me out?'—'Why, I'll teel ye all aboot it, sir,' he replied, but without the smallest ap-

pearance of agitation or confusion. 'Ye maun ken, sir, that finding, from your address on your trunk, ye were of mickle rank in the army, I thought ye might have the poower of serving me, and so I made up my meend to call on you.'—'Really!' I cried; 'and, pray, what may it be you require from me?'—'Hech, sir! any leetle thing in your way—the clerkship of a paymaster, or any sic trifling matter—nothing will come ameess; for ye are to ken, sir, I've ganged from Scotland to seek my fortune.'—'Indeed!' I said; 'and pray, Mr. Sawney——' 'Sandy, sir, if ye pleese.'—'Well, Mr. Sandy,' I cried, 'have you no friends in your own country, that you should come to me, a stranger, for my interest?'—'Gude forbid, sir, that I could no' boast,' he replied, 'of some! But, ye maun ken, I dinna like to apply to ony of the great men I know, till I have something to give up for any thing they might get me.'—'Oh, I understand you—you want to make me a kind of stepping-ladder?'—'The vere theeng,' he

cried; 'you could na have guessed my meening better, had ye been puzzling your brains for a twelmonth.'—'Well, Mr. Sandy, upon my soul, I see you'll not want any thing for asking.'—'Hech no, sir! 'tis not oor way in Scotland,' he returned; 'we tal what we want, and so gie oor friens an awportunity of serving us, if they ha' the poower.'—'And inclination,' I added.—'Ah, faith, sir, we must e'en tak' oor chance for that,' he cried, 'and no' be too much fashed, if we should no' succeed at once. We may be reebuffed—and reebuffed, but patience and peerseverance are unco things.'—'Quite a philosopher! But, unfortunately for you, Mr. Sandy, not having the same facility in asking favours that you have, I much fear my lacking the power of giving you the lift you require.'—'Weel, weel, sir—no harm doon,' he cried: 'ane can but try, and be disappointed. Perhaps, sir, when least thinking of it, something might come across ye that would just be doing me; and so, sir, with your gude

leeve, I'll just be bold enough to call from teeme to teeme; for 'tis a bonny thing, ye ken, to substitute the wages of industry for ane's ain siller."

"Well said, Sandy!" cried Auberville, with a laugh; "as the dairy-maid in the farce observes, such fellows would find room any where. What say you, Hastings?" laying his hand on his shoulder.

Hastings tried to force a languid smile, tried to rouse himself to some exertion, but in vain—all that he had felt, all that he feared, weighed heavy on his heart at the moment, and precluded all inclination for converse. In his present frame of mind, nothing could be more irksome than observation, and in consequence he almost regretted not having been timely apprised of Auberville and his friend being about travelling in the same direction, that he might have avoided them.

They should have reached the town contiguous to Mrs. Orwell's residence early in the evening, but, owing to an accident, they did not get to it till late at night; of

course, he abandoned all intention of proceeding thither till morning; but, under the plea of a continued headache, soon withdrew from his companions. But in vain he sought the repose he so much needed, so true is the remark, that

> "Tir'd nature's sweet restorer, balmy Sleep,
> He, like the world, his ready visit pays
> Where Fortune smiles—the wretched he forsakes—
> Swift on his downy pinions flies from woe,
> And lights on lids unsullied by a tear."

At dawn of day he rose, and set out on foot for Mrs. Orwell's: he had five miles to walk to the house. He was passing a lonely churchyard, when, uncertain whether he was going right or not, he stopped to inquire of an old woman, whom, at the instant, he saw making her way through the long wet grass of the place. While speaking to her, his eye was caught by a letter in her hand: looking attentively at it, he saw the direction was to him, and in the writing of his mother.—"Good God!" he exclaimed, making an effort to

take it from her, " how did you come by that?—it is directed to me."

But, ere her reply is stated, 'tis necessary to give some previous particulars.

CHAPTER X.

" Yet why, you ask, these humble crimes relate?
Why make the poor as guilty as the great?—
To shew the great, those mightier sons of pride,
How near in vice the lowest are allied;
Such are their natures, and their passions such;
But these disguise too little, those too much."

On the unhappy event that compelled her humble friends to leave the peaceful dwelling that had afforded her an asylum, Mrs. Stovendale immediately decided on repairing to the house of Mrs. Orwell, till the settlement of the affair (which the misunderstanding between Hastings and Mr. Bryerly had a good deal impeded) should permit her to make something like

a final arrangement for herself. A long intimacy had subsisted between her and Mrs. Orwell, in the course of which both she and Mr. Stovendale had conferred many obligations on that lady and her family, very unexpected events having put them in possession of the affluence they now enjoyed, and in consequence she had not a doubt of being received with sisterly affection by Mrs. Orwell, more especially from the regret she had often expressed at not having as yet had an opportunity of evincing, by more than words, the gratitude she felt for former kindness: indeed, so certain was she of meeting from her with every kind and consolatory attention, that in the first instance she would have repaired to her, but for the style of gaiety she knew she lived in, so little according with the feelings she was then enduring. Trusting, however, that on these she should not be obliged to put any unpleasant restraint, she wrote to her, on the eve of her departure, to apprise her of her

intended visit, and request that her carriage might meet her at the place where the stage in which she travelled would set her down.

Her journey was long and fatiguing, being in a great degree across the country; and truly rejoiced was she, unaccustomed as she had hitherto been to travelling without her own attendants and the power of stopping when she pleased, when she was dropped at the place where she had appointed Mrs. Orwell's carriage to meet her. Immediately she inquired for it; but, instead of being told it was then waiting for her, a letter was put into her hand from Mrs. Orwell, which ran as follows:—

"*To Mrs. Stovendale.*

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"How impossible to express the vexation your letter (this moment received) has given me, from my utter inability to profit by the intention it has avowed! But, at this very instant, young

and old, bag and baggage, we are on the wing for old Crabtree's, the old testy uncle of Mr. Orwell, whom I believe I before mentioned to you—who, after choosing for some time to be on distant terms with us, has again thought proper to intimate a wish for a renewal of our former intercourse. Gladly, delightedly would I decline, on your account, accompanying the rest of the family on their visit to him, but that Orwell assures me he would probably be irreconcilably offended if I did, as he would impute my doing so to resentment for his past conduct, and 'tis not our interest to irritate him. Thus situate, I hope and trust you'll excuse my not at present being able to receive you; and, judging of me by yourself, conceive what I feel on the occasion. Some future time, however, not far distant, will, I trust, give me the long-coveted happiness of your society, when I hope—'tis unnecessary to say what my pleasure will be.

"But I have not time to expatiate further at present on this subject, all being

bustle and preparation here for our immediate departure; besides, I am anxious for the dispatch of this, that, should you not already have set out, it may be the means of preventing so useless a journey; as, in case of your not being arrived at ———, I have given directions to have it directly forwarded to you. 'Tis a pity that you did not apprise me a little sooner of your intention—But time presses—God bless you! and earnestly entreating you, for the sake of your many friends as well as your immediate health, to keep up your spirits, believe me sincerely yours,

" ELIZA ORWELL.

" *Clover Hall, May* ——."

The disappointment inflicted by this letter was a cruel one to Mrs. Stovendale, harassed as she was in mind and body. There was now no alternative but going to London, the bustle and noise of which she had wished to avoid; and as a delay on the road was, on many accounts, incon-

venient and unpleasant, she decided on immediately setting out for a town about twenty miles off, where she was assured she might depend on getting a place to town the next day, but which she could not by any means do where she then was.

Accordingly a chaise was ordered; but, to her extreme vexation, on reaching the first stage, she found it impossible to procure another, though she saw several drawn out before the door. Inquiring, since this was the case, why she was refused one, the landlady, to whom the question was addressed, informed her they were engaged by families in the neighbourhood, to take them to a great entertainment, given that evening by a lady belonging to it.

"What lady?" almost mechanically asked Mrs. Stovendale.

"Madam Orwell, the lady of squire Orwell, of Clover Hall," the landlady replied.

Mrs. Stovendale started.—"What!" in excessive agitation repeating the name, she exclaimed—"By her?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered the landlady, without seeming to notice her change of countenance, or the emotion occasioned by her communication; "the young squire has just come of age, and there's been nothing but feasting going on this fortnight, to celebrate the event. Bless your heart! there has not been such doings in these here parts, no, not since the last election. Why, if you'll believe it, they have got play-actors down from Lunnon, and the Lord knows what a mort of company."

She might have gone on for hours without interruption, so completely was Mrs. Stovendale overpowered by the cruel shock her feelings had just sustained—the shock of finding herself completely deceived where she had sincerely confided. Tears could not be repressed at this instance of baseness, of ingratitude, of worldly-mindedness—tears of mingled indignation and grief.

When a little recovered, her anxiety to get on being, if possible, increased, she renewed her application for a chaise, but in

vain—till the ensuing day she was positively told she could not obtain one; and then, not till an hour when it would be too late to secure a seat in any of the expected stages.

In an agony of disappointment, she was about desiring to be shewn into a more private room than the one she was then in, when a decent-looking countryman, who had been listening to her entreaties, suddenly exclaimed, since the lady seemed in such a nonplush, and wanted so badly to get on, why, if so be as how she would take a seat in the chaise-cart, in which he was going himself directly to the place she wanted to go to, she would be heartily welcome, and he would be bound to set her down safe and sound.

The cheek of Mrs. Stovendale flushed, and for a moment a sensation of pride made her hesitate; then reflecting on the inconvenience she should be put to, if she allowed this feeling to prevail, her good sense triumphed, and she gratefully accepted the offer.

Two or three miles from the place she had left, there was a lonely common to pass: about the middle of it, the man, suddenly drawing in the horse, said he hoped she would have no objection to getting down for a minute or two, as he wanted to call at a neighbouring farm-house, the lane leading to which was so broken up by the cart-wheels, that it would be unpleasant for her to go down it. An apprehensive unwillingness to be left alone in so solitary a place made her hesitate for a minute; but perceiving, by the looks of her companion, he expected her to do as he wished, she at length stepped down, but not without an entreaty that he would not be long.

Giving the whip to the horse, he was soon out of sight; and, left to herself, the feelings of Mrs. Stovendale could no longer be controlled. How painfully, how dreadfully did her present situation make her feel the reverse that had taken place in her circumstances! Alone, apparently deserted at the moment, without a being to

whom she could turn for pity or succour, she felt as if sinking to the earth, or rather as if inclined, through sorrow and despair, to throw herself on it. Present misery might have been borne with something of courage, had any thing been beheld in the future to compensate for it; but hope and expectation were annihilated in her bosom at the moment. For herself, and, oh! doubly afflicting for her idolized Hastings, she beheld nothing in the perspective but anxiety and suffering.—"Oh, Stovendale!" in the anguish of her bursting heart she involuntarily exclaimed, as, clasping her cold trembling hands together, her streaming eyes were uplifted, "could you have been convinced! But I reproach not your memory—no, Heaven is my witness, not with resentment, but sorrow do I dwell on it."

At length she was roused from her melancholy abstraction by wonder at the long absence of the man: night was by this time at hand, and the increasing darkness, while

it heightened her impatience for his return, rendered still more savage and frightful the aspect of the place where he had left her —with its tangled copses and clustering brushwood, it seemed particularly calculated for deeds of terror. In vain she watched, in vain she listened; and, to add to her discomfort, a drizzling rain, that had long been threatening, now began to fall.

Near the spot where she had alighted there was a wretched hovel, the only habitation she could see; and, after a little hesitation, she at length decided on repairing to this, for the double purpose of seeking a temporary shelter and trying to get some one to go in search of him. A fire was blazing within, and, in passing, she had the precaution to look in at the window, if one patched pane of glass was entitled to the appellation, and, seeing only an old woman, was encouraged to persevere in her intention. Her tap was immediately answered by the person she had thus seen,

who, though truly wild in her attire, her garments being literally composed of shreds and patches, was still mild and courteous.

On learning what the stranger wanted, she directly invited her to the fireside, and said she would try and procure her such a person as she wanted, and which, she said, she made no doubt she should be able to do amongst the shepherds that, about this time, came to fold, for the night, the flocks that fed upon the common. Accordingly, sallying forth, she speedily returned with a lad, who readily undertook what Mrs. Stovendale required. He was not long absent, but came back with a blank look, saying no such person as she described had called at any of the adjacent farm-houses.

Distrust, now almost amounting to a conviction of having been imposed on, took possession of the agitated soul of Mrs. Stovendale; her agony was inexpressible: if robbed, as she had now but too much reason to suspect, she was robbed of every article she was mistress of, with-

out the power of replacing them—only just sufficient to defray the expences of her journey remaining in her purse. Endeavouring to hope, however, that, even if it were as she feared, she might still be able to obtain such information at the place where he had taken her up, as might lead to the recovery of her property, she dispatched the lad to make an inquiry there.

His absence seemed to her of incalculable length, and the interval was rendered still less bearable by the garrulity of the old woman, who, in order to divert her thoughts from dwelling on her misfortune, or perhaps from the gratification derived from sympathy, began a tale of her own mishaps, which were indeed of the most piteous kind, such as had doomed her in age—

> "To strip the brook, with mantling cresses spread;
> To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn;
> To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn."

At another time, and Mrs. Stovendale, but too susceptible, would have lent a pa-

tient as well as a pitying ear to this tale of woe; but now she was in a state of agitation too intense, too feverish, to be able to attend calmly to any thing. At length her messenger returned, with information that the people of the inn knew nothing of the man she had left it with, and that she must remember not having asked them any questions concerning him. This too late she recollected, with a degree of astonishment at her imprudence in having ventured with him, without some previous inquiry. But dearly was this punished: a dizziness seized her head, ere she could arrange any immediate plan, that compelled her to lie down upon the poor woman's pallet. Here a deep sleep shortly suspended her faculties, from which she awoke, towards morning, in the delirium of a fever, utterly unconscious of her situation.

The poor woman was in a terrible quandary, to use her own words, at this, more especially when, on searching the pockets of the unfortunate stranger, she found no-

thing in them that could give her any clue to her friends; however, in her way, she was a kind of philosopher—one of those who make the best of every thing; accordingly, instead of sitting down to lament and bemoan the unlucky chance that had thrown an afflicted and apparently-destitute stranger upon means too scanty for herself, she set about doing every thing in her power to relieve and comfort her.

But what a situation for a being of refinement—nursed in the very lap of elegance and luxury, and long accustomed to all the tendernesses of domestic life, to be reduced to—thrown, in the hour of sickness, upon casual charity for succour, and that the charity of a person herself compelled to be indebted to benevolence! But, alas! how many amiable, how many estimable and highly-gifted women have been compelled, through similar means, to drink of a cup equally bitter—the extravagance of a thoughtless and dissipated husband, and to have the heart-rending

affliction of seeing a family doomed to years of lingering dependence, or turned wild, vagrants upon the world!

For a fortnight Mrs. Stovendale remained in a state of unconsciousness: on the restoration of her senses, the state of weakness to which she was reduced made her consider it very doubtful her being ever able to rise, and accordingly induced her to make the most distressing exertions to write to Hastings; for, oh! to die without his loved hand to close her eyes, was a thought of agony that aggravated every pang.

The way in which Hastings received this letter is already known: how his heart was wrung at its perusal, may easier be conceived than described. But, if such were his feelings at the recital of her sufferings, what were they at the actual sight of the abject wretchedness she was in—the dreadful privations her hollow eyes and ashy cheek but too clearly evidenced! Not even the joy of seeing him could revive her, for it was dashed by bitterness

at the thought of what he must suffer from the situation he found her in.

When a little recovered from the shock occasioned by this, he lost not a moment in dispatching a messenger to the nearest town, for a physician and some nourishing things; but he seemed fated to be overwhelmed by despair at this moment, for, in less than half an hour, the messenger returned, with a look of wildness, to say he had lost, he knew not how, the note he had given him to get changed.

Hastings was absolutely petrified by this information, since in this note was comprised, within a few shillings, all the wealth he was then master of. For a few minutes he was in a state that precluded all exertion; then a little recovering himself, he decided, though most reluctantly, on acquainting Auberville with what had occurred.

While awaiting his reply, he tried to calm his agitated mind, by a hope that a transient delay in procuring his mother what she required might not be attended

with any material consequence; but this hope soon threatened to be delusive, her weakness every moment increasing, till at last her scarce-illumined eye evinced a total abstraction, at times, from external objects. Oh! what, at these moments, was the anguish of the afflicted son, when he saw himself gazed at, without any seeming interest or recognition, by her to whose fond anxiety, whose doting tenderness, he had been so long accustomed! Now and then the apparently-expiring spark seemed to revive a little, and those intervals were employed by her in trying to reconcile him to what she now believed inevitable. At length he became impatient for the return of his messenger; the fact was, there was a fair in the neighbourhood, and to this Edith at last suggested the probability of his having digressed, instead of proceeding straight forward, as he should have done.

His distraction renewed at the suggestion; instead of any longer waiting for

him, Hastings decided on repairing himself, without farther delay, to Auberville; he took advantage of a transient sleep into which his mother had fallen, to steal away, but not without a dread of finding Auberville gone. On reaching the inn, however, he had the comfort of ascertaining that this was a needless fear; but, on hastening to seek him, he found the general only in the apartment.

Scarcely seeming to notice his greeting, Hastings eagerly inquired for Auberville, and was informed that, on missing him, he had set out to Mrs. Orwell's after him. At this cruel disappointment Hastings, turning sick, was compelled to catch at a chair by which he was standing, for support. His change of countenance was instantly noticed by the general, who, catching him by the arm, eagerly inquired what was the matter? whether there was any thing required of Auberville that he could do for him?

Agony and distraction of soul precluded all reply from Hastings: if to make known

to Auberville his situation was painful, as it was in the extreme to the sensitive pride of birth, how doubly so was it to a total stranger! He groaned in despair, and unconsciously let his head drop on the shoulder of the general.

At this moment Auberville rushed in; he had, as stated, been to seek Hastings at Mrs. Orwell's, and receiving no tidings of him there, became alarmed, and hurried back, much agitated, to renew his inquiry elsewhere. An explanation was no longer to be avoided, and the result was every thing that was gratifying to the filial heart of Hastings.

By skilful care, by unremitting attention, the suffering invalid was snatched from the grave; and, as soon as she could bear the fatigue, was removed to a neighbouring farmhouse, where accommodation was provided for the whole party. Here Auberville united with Hastings in rendering her all those attentions at present so needful, and to heightened esteem

was added the liveliest gratitude for his kindness and feeling; nor did the general by any means appear deficient in either; on the contrary, so lively was the interest he manifested for those so recently known to him, that by degrees no slight regard was experienced for him.

Neither Hastings nor his mother knew how it was, but, as the returning strength of the latter allowed her to bear conversation, they were still led by their companions into family discussions. At length, at the end of a fortnight, Auberville one morning presented her with an enclosed letter from Dr. Grafton, in which, after a little prefacing, to prepare her for the surprise that awaited her, he proceeded to state the occurrence between Grandison and his father during her absence from E——, and his now revealing it for the purpose of apprising her that, in future, she was in Auberville to recognize him, who had adopted this mode of introducing himself to her and Hastings, lest, avowing himself in the first instance, prejudice

might operate against that confidence he wished to inspire, in order to ascertain whether they were or not the characters he had been led to believe them. The observations he had the power of making, from the intimacy that took place between them, so thoroughly persuaded him that they had been wronged in his opinion, as to lead to an immediate investigation of the facts fabricated for that purpose; the result of which was a discovery of their having been indeed fabricated, from the most selfish, the most unprincipled motives. Directly upon the detection of this, he had laid the whole affair before his grandfather, lord Fitzossory; but who, far from attending to his representation, had with deep regret, it was stated, denied all credit to it; following up the denial by a declaration that, if he persisted in his determination of an intercourse in future with them, it was his to banish him his presence.—"But this declaration, though threatening such injury to his interest, has not been able to overcome the natural

feelings of my young friend," the doctor concluded by adding—"He has nobly decided on acting as nature and principle dictate, and leaving the event to chance."

On what immediately followed the perusal of this letter it must be unnecessary to dwell—the transport of Hastings at finding, in a being so admired, so esteemed, the brother he had long sighed to know—of Mrs. Stovendale, at the tie of friendship, strong and ardent friendship, being now added to that of nature between them. But their joy, like human joy in general, was not without alloy; to think of what he was incurring, or might ultimately incur on their account, dashed it with bitterness.

But, ere the agitation occasioned by the discovery relative to him had in any degree subsided, a disclosure was made by general Stormont that, if possible, astonished them still more. The gentleman who, by proving a better title to it, had been the means of depriving Mr. Stovendale of the estate that conferred upon him

the name of Grandison, belonged to the Company's service in India. Particular events had given him a disgust to his native country; notwithstanding which, it was his intention, at some period or other, to have returned to it: this intention, however, death frustrated. In his last moments he made a will, by which he bequeathed, in trust, to the general, whom he had long and intimately known, the whole of his estates, real and personal, in trust for either of the sons of his deceased kinsman, Mr. Stovendale, whom he should ascertain to be, in pursuits and propensities, least like his father, of whose extravagant and dissipated conduct he had a perfect knowledge, and which the displeasure it excited was one great means of making him assert his claim to a fortune he did not want.—"On my deputed investigation I expressly came over," proceeded the general, "and immediately set about the inquiries requisite to ascertain the point required by my friend. After a little stay in this kingdom, I passed over to Ireland for the same pur-

pose; and conceiving a little personal observation might be of use in the business, I decided on getting myself introduced to both. Colonel Grandison's address was first obtained, and to him I very frankly confided the whimsical affair, for such it certainly must be considered; and in reply, after revealing to me sufficient to account for his not being yet known to him in his real character, offered to introduce me to his brother, who, in justice, he declared, from not having the expectations he had, should be the old gentleman's heir; which is, must quickly be decided between them, for, faith! I am too careless and too indolent to like the encumbering care of any one's fortune but my own; and as to making a decision myself, that I cannot do, from a conviction that it would make me feel guilty of injustice."

Hastings was for some time too much overpowered by this disclosure to be able to speak immediately; when at length able to do justice to his feelings, he pro-

tested against a decision in his favour—"No," he cried, with all the ardent warmth of his nature, "after the generous proof of attachment my brother has given me—after the predicament in which he has placed himself, on my account, with his grandfather, I should deem myself the most ignoble, the most ungenerous of human beings, if I could permit such a preference; besides, according to the rules of nature, 'tis but fit, 'tis but just, too, that, as the elder, I should look up to him; and with joy, with transport do I think of having such an opportunity of evincing my full confidence in his regard. Can I give a greater proof of it than by entrusting, not merely my own interests in his hands, but those of a dear and suffering mother?"

Oh! what a moment of overpowering joy to Mrs. Stovendale, as its delicious tears fell upon her colourless cheeks! How did her soul exult at having such a son—how, at their being able to prove to the

noble, the generous Grandison, their sentiments of him!

"Well, well, be it as you please, good folks," said the general, but not without a hem or two, that proved him not altogether unused to the melting mood; "wonders, they say, will never cease; and if, in this age at least, 'tis not one to have a dashing young fellow reject a proffered fortune, I don't know what is: wooden horses, and ships to go against wind and tide, are nothing to it."

Grandison remained, for some time after the declaration of Hastings, apparently lost in thought; the suggestion that had occasioned his reverie made him then decide on not opposing it; it was of little consequence, he conceived, whom he received the fortune from—whether it was by him or the general he was put in possession of it; and, after such a proof of disinterestedness as his conduct on this occasion would furnish, he conceived it impossible that lord Fitzossory could longer persevere in his prejudice against him or his mother;

in short, he anticipated so pleasing a result from it as made him rejoice at the idea he had adopted.

To have every thing done that was requisite for making over the property, a journey to London was necessary; and accordingly it was settled that, in the course of a few days, the party should proceed thither. But, in the midst of their arrangements, poor old Edith was not forgotten: such was the provision made for her, such the recompence her charity met with, that, to the last moment, she had reason to bless the hour that led the benighted and afflicted stranger to the shelter of her humble and decaying roof.

CHAPTER XI.

" Next Anger rush'd, his eyes on fire,
In lightnings own'd his secret stings—
In one rude clash he struck the lyre,
And swept with hurried hands the strings."

.....

" Your words have took such pains, as if they labour'd
To bring manslaughter into favour, set quarrelling
Upon the head of valour, which, indeed,
Is valour misbegot, and came into the world
When sects and factions were but newly born."

The business on which they went to the great city was soon arranged, and immediately after, Hastings's leave of absence being expired, he set out for Ireland. Grandison might have accompanied him, but, on the terms on which he was at present with his grandfather, he preferred rejoining his regiment, stationed at the time in the neighbourhood of Windsor. Pleasant lodgings, with every thing suitable to her rank in life, were provided for Mrs. Sto-

vendale in the vicinity of the parks, and the general took up his abode in one of the fashionable hotels.

Mrs. Stovendale had fully expected to have enjoyed the society of Fidelia on her revisit to the metropolis; but, just about the period of her arrival, Fidelia had left it, on a distant excursion with the Bryerlys. She was a good deal vexed by her disappointment; but, when she had recovered a little from it, she knew not whether she was not better pleased than otherwise at it, aware as she was of Fidelia's prepossession in favour of Grandison, and ignorant as she still remained of his exact intentions relative to her. That he had ever entertained such as he had once been accused of, she fully acquitted him; but, at the same time, he might admire without being serious. He had inquired, with every appearance of the deepest interest, into all she knew—into all she thought concerning her; but, though her answers satisfied him she was the person he had originally conceived, not a word escaped him that could

let her surmise what his determination was in consequence. The fact was, some few inquiries yet remained to be satisfied, and, till they were, Grandison determined to let things remain as they were; yet perhaps he could not have formed this determination without a painful struggle, but for the conviction that every thing would be satisfactorily explained.

The anxious Hastings no sooner found himself again in the vicinity of Rock Fort, than he sought to apprise Albina of the circumstance, and accordingly addressed a letter to her to that effect: but no notice was taken of it; and this, united to the prevalent reports in the neighbourhood, of her approaching nuptials with the marquis of Inverary, so distracted and alarmed him as to occasion him to write to Grandison on the subject.

This letter, full of all the incoherence of agitation and passion, decided Grandison on immediately going over. This decision announced to Mrs. Stovendale and the general, both immediately determined on

accompanying him; the former, from natural anxiety—the latter, the pleasure he took in roving about, and the attachment he had gradually conceived for these two interesting young men.

Having apprised Hastings of their intention, every thing requisite for the accommodation of the party was provided, in the vicinity of the place where he was quartered, against their arrival. Immediately after, Grandison lost no time in addressing a letter to his grandfather, still more explanatory, if possible, of all that had recently occurred, than any previous one on the subject, and in which, after dwelling on the generous disinterestedness of Hastings, he conjured him to let himself be no longer influenced by prejudice against characters so truly noble as both his and his mother's, but, for the sake of general happiness, to admit them to a participation of his friendship and esteem; and dismiss, without farther hesitation, from his protection, the wretch who had so basely, cruelly tried to keep this alive,

and estrange the nearest connexions from each other.

His letter, at once affectionate, respectful, and rational—at once appealing to sense, to feeling, and to principle—could scarcely have failed of having the desired effect, had it reached the hand it was intended for. But Walter had gone too far to recede—to keep asunder the grandfather and grandson was all he could now depend on for preventing his own final disgrace. He had found means of securing in his interest the daughter of the man at whose shop the post-office was kept; every letter addressed to the earl or Albina was by her secretly given to him, and by him, after a perusal, either destroyed or delivered, as best suited his purposes. Not satisfied with suppressing the one above alluded to, he determined on answering it, as if received by the earl, having latterly taught himself to imitate his hand, in a manner that might have deceived the nicest eye. That he omitted nothing in this fabricated answer that had a tendency

to irritate the feelings of Grandison, or widen the breach between him and his grandfather, may readily be believed: he accused Grandison of falsehood and duplicity—of his having attempted to impose upon his understanding, by a statement for which, he was convinced, there was not the slightest foundation; and finally concluded with declaring that it was his fixed determination never to admit him to his presence, or hold farther converse with him, till he had separated himself from his newly-acknowledged connexions.

The indignation of Grandison at being accused of falsehood, of plots and contrivances, was unutterable—such as decided him against any farther application on any subject to the earl. But to neglect what was so essential to Hastings was not to be thought of; accordingly he decided on a private conference with Albina, for the purpose of informing her of the reverse in his situation, and that, as Mrs. Stovendale was ready to receive her, there

was nothing to prevent their immediate union.

The letter he sent her, to inform her of his wish for this conference, and where and at what hour he conceived it might safely take place, like every other now addressed to her, fell into the hands of Walter, who, after a little hesitation, in conformity to the scheme it suggested, had it delivered according to its original destination; when, having ascertained the answer expected to it was returned, he forthwith wrote an anonymous billet to Dundonald, informing him that, at such an hour the ensuing night, an appointment was to take place between Hastings and his sister in her dressing-room.

This billet had the effect of irritating all that was fiery in the nature of Dundonald: had he yielded to his native impetuosity, he would instantly have burst out in vengeance on the offending parties; but policy required the suppression; to let the marquis know of the attachment of his

sister, and he was convinced he would immediately declare off.

In the course of the evening he mentioned his wish to Miss Clinton, that she would engage Albina in such a way as should prevent her quitting her. More than suspecting his motive for this, Miss Clinton readily promised what he desired, and so artfully managed matters, that, to her inconceivable distress, Albina saw the hour of appointment approach, without the possibility of keeping it.

Dundonald no sooner found it at hand, than he repaired, with loaded pistols, to the dressing-room, to which a private passage led through a tower it adjoined. Here he had not been long stationed when the door from this passage opened, and Grandison appeared, but so completely muffled up in his regimental pelisse, as not to be known from the person he was supposed to be. At the first sound of the opening door Dundonald immediately seized the pistols, determined on immediate satisfaction for his insulted honour—insulted by

any attempt at a clandestine correspondence with his sister, and which he conceived he might punish in this way, without any thing transpiring that could injure her with the marquis.

Grandison was advancing, when the sight of Dundonald caused him involuntarily to draw back, through surprise. Construing this movement into an intention of retreating, Dundonald immediately rushed towards him; in his eagerness to prevent his escape, he stumbled, and one of the pistols he held unguardedly going off at the moment, its contents lodged in the side of Grandison, and he fell. The groan that escaped him at the moment betrayed, to the horror stricken Dundonald, the mistake he had been betrayed into; his frantic cries for assistance speedily alarmed the family; of course, every requisite aid was instantly procured, but without a hope that it could save the life of the sufferer. He was raised from the floor in a state of insensibility, and on the examination of his wound, it was pro-

nounced to be of the most dangerous description.

How the dreadful catastrophe had been brought about was the next consideration: the distracted Dundonald gave the required explanation. This led to a disclosure of the letter received by his sister from Grandison—a disclosure that permitted not a doubt of treachery having been practised. A strict and immediate investigation took place, the result of which was a full detection of the villany of Walter. Terrified by what had happened, his assistant in obtaining the letters could not evade the inquiries that were instituted, and with equal shame, indignation, and regret, the earl saw he had, when perhaps too late, been the dupe of an artful, selfish villain: too late! yes—with anguish unutterable he had but too much reason to imagine this, when, stretched apparently on a dying bed, he beheld the pride of his days, the darling of his age.

Oh! woe unutterable! unmitigable!—

through his obstinacy—his wilful, his determined blindness—was the admired, the beloved of every heart, to be doomed to an early grave!—he whom he had so proudly, so fondly looked forward to, as being not only the means of perpetuating, but adding new dignity to his name!—But through him only could punishment have reached him—that punishment that, with deep contrition, with all the humiliation of a spirit bowed to the dust, he now acknowledged to be merited, for the unjustifiable prejudices he had encouraged—there, where all his hopes centered, could the lightning of vengeance have struck with desolating fury.

All that he had before tried to discredit, he could now no longer disbelieve, or rather no longer sought to do so—the claim of Hastings and his mother to the regard of Grandison; they were not merely admitted in this hour of calamity—they were clung to, as if they only could impart any consolation to him, their con-

nexion to the sufferer making him conceive that they, better than any others, could understand his feelings.

With feelings easier conceived than described they learned the dreadful catastrophe: the anguish it occasioned was aggravated by the consideration of the motives that had led to it—the generous solicitude of Grandison for the happiness of Hastings. And, for the loss of such a brother, what could compensate the sorrowing Hastings? Nothing that the world contained within its wide circumference—not even love, propitious love itself; for, from the idea of any tie that could connect him with his destroyer, he shrunk with recoiling horror, as from one that had something monstrous in it. And was this the end of all his recent prospects?—were all his blissful anticipations thus terminated, in the very noon of his days? had he nothing to look forward to but a blank and dreary existence? The brother of his heart, the friend of his soul, mouldering in a premature grave, and nature opposing barriers

between him and the object of his regard —what remained that could delight or enliven it?—Oh! had he been indeed, as intended, the mark of the vengeful arm of Dundonald, what misery would he have been spared! how faint would have been the pangs of expiring nature to those he now felt!

If he, unable to reproach himself, thus felt, what, it may be supposed, did the self-condemned Dundonald feel? Distraction seized him; and thus was he prevented rushing out, as, in the first moments of his agony, he intended, to surrender himself to justice.

The sorrowing Albina made his situation a pretext for confining herself almost solely to his apartment; as if implicated in his guilt, she could not bear the encounter of any eye, for in every eye she conceived she should read reproach and detestation. Not, however, from selfish motives did she grieve for Grandison—from the high esteem he had obtained, she would have mourned sincerely for him,

even though her fate had not been in any degree involved in his. But this deathblow, she was but too well aware, was the deathblow of her happiness—the knell that tolled him to an untimely grave, she was but too well aware, would prove the knell of her expiring hopes—those hopes, so lately glowing, so lately rekindled. But a few hours, and how buoyant had been her feelings!—what a long perspective of felicity appeared in view!

From what had now occurred, the marquis could no longer be deceived as to the real cause of her coldness to him; and with deep resentment towards those who had prevented her being explicit, as he now saw had been her wish, he addressed a letter to her, resigning his pretensions, and bidding her farewell.

Amongst those who had cause for grief and self-reproach, Miss Clinton must not be omitted. That, in a degree, she was accessary to the recent catastrophe, she could not forbear thinking, from her con-

sciousness of the tyranny she had instigated Dundonald to exercise over his sister; and that, of course, in some way or other she merited punishment.

Mrs. Stovendale, though overwhelmed with affliction, endeavoured, for the sake of others, to maintain composure; in watching by the sufferer, and in endeavouring to sooth the wild anguish of his grandfather, her feelings alone received alleviation.

General Stormont deeply deplored what had happened, but his pity was all confined to where alone it certainly was due; he was a great admirer of practical justice, and could not in consequence, by any means, join in trying to lessen the feelings of the earl. His unjust prejudice against Mrs. Stovendale and her son, the illiberality that engendered, and the selfishness that nourished it, were all deserving of punishment; and all that was to be regretted, he said, was, that in order to inflict this, a noble and generous being was destined to be the victim.—"See the consequences of

your conduct!" he cried—"of your unnatural attempts to estrange the brother from the brother, and pervert the best affections of our nature!—The ancient name, of which you were so proud, threatened with extinction, and the last hope of your house sinking into the grave! Had you permitted the cultivation of his regard for his brother—that intercourse their relationship prompted—no plotting villain would have been able to have contrived your misery. But thus are we punished for efforts to circumvent the intentions of Providence; and, being wise in our own conceit, no doubt you thought your contrivances admirable. But see how they are baffled! Yet a few years, and what will remain of the illustrious house of Fitzossory? Instead of a blooming generation, the legend of the tomb will alone perpetuate its honours. Ay, well may you wring your hands, well may you tear your hair: these are the locks indeed that should have strewed the ground, and not the shining ones of Grandison."

Thus speaking daggers, the indignant Stormont nearly drove the unhappy grandfather to distraction; in vain Mrs. Stovendale remonstrated with him on the subject—the greatest kindness that could now be shewn him, he said, was to awaken such a sense of repentance in him as might inspire a hope of Heaven's forgiveness for his conduct.

Each succeeding moment lessened the hope that, while life remains, will linger in the heart for Grandison's recovery: the ball had not been extracted, and the most fatal consequences were augured from the circumstance. Additional aid was sent for to Dublin, and in the most agonizing state of suspense its arrival was awaited.

During the interval, the senses of Grandison frequently wandered; whenever he was collected, he seemed to forget his own sufferings, for the purpose of trying to alleviate those of others. He wished to have seen his grandfather, but, fearful he might not be able to support the sight of his distress, contented himself with recommend-

ing him to the care and tenderness of Mrs. Stovendale and his brother. He left it in solemn charge with the latter, to assure Dundonald of his forgiveness, and to see that no injurious misrepresentations went forth concerning him; for to accident alone he pretended to impute what had happened. But nothing could obtain for him the consolatory assurance of Hastings yet being happy himself. Fearful of the scruples that might now oppose his union with Albina, he strove to extort a promise that they should not interfere to prevent it—but to no purpose, Hastings shrinking with a kind of horror from the thought of forming a connexion that could give to the man who had deprived him of him, the title of brother.

Enshrined in his heart, it would have been strange had Fidelia been forgotten at this moment: her name was breathed in sighs, was murmured in prayer—and her pitying form, dewing with tears his early grave, ever present to his imagination.

At length the surgeons expected so anxiously from Dublin arrived, and a consultation immediately taking place, it was decided that, as the only chance of saving his life was to extract the ball, a painful operation must be had recourse to for the purpose; but from which, owing to the exhausted state he was now in, such danger was apprehended as left little hope of its proving of avail.

Grandison would not, could not be deceived; and accordingly, ere he allowed the operation to be performed, took a solemn leave of all who had courage to approach his bed. The thoughts of death, to one like him, blest with an approving conscience, could not be dreadful; but still was it a melancholy thing—in the very bloom of his days, with all the ardent affections, the glowing energies of his nature still undamped in his heart—with all too that could render life desirable—to be snatched away. But, while he could not suppress a wish that it had been the will of Heaven to have spared

him yet a little longer, he bowed submissive to that will.

The operation was performed with the greatest skill; but, notwithstanding the fever dreaded from it ensued, and for some successive days the life of Grandison seemed to hang upon a thread, a favourable change then took place, and from that period he rapidly amended.

Never was joy greater than the joy his recovery occasioned—never a greater transition from despair to happiness, or more pious thanksgivings returned to Heaven for the restoration of any one.

CHAPTER XII.

"———— Ah! what is human life?
How, like the dial's tardy-moving shade,
Day after day slides from us unperceiv'd!"

What unhappiness was Fidelia spared by knowing nothing of these occurrences till all danger was over! Mrs. Stovendale

then wrote to inform her of them, and that most of the party at Rock Fort, that is, the dowager lady De Bellemont, lady Caroline Ayrcourt, Miss Clinton, Albina, her brother, and Hastings, together with herself, were on the point of setting off for Bath, where the nuptials of the two latter were to be solemnized, and where, purposing to have a residence to herself, she expected to see her.

Mingled indeed were the feelings of Fidelia at the perusal of this letter, but joy, of course, was predominant: in this the Bryerlys shared, but, from selfish motives, and influenced by these, compelled her to repair to Bath as soon as ever they had, by persevering inquiries, ascertained the arrival of the party from Rock Fort there.

Anxious as was Fidelia to find herself again under the immediate protection of Mrs. Stovendale, still, from a feeling of delicacy, she wished to decline rejoining her till immediately invited. But the Bryerlys were positive; it was time, they

conceived, for them to reap some advantage from their kindness to her, and this they doubted not they should, on her joining her friend; in short, they made sure of an invitation, at least to some part of the family, from the circumstance; and, in impatience for this, they overruled every objection she made to setting off for Bath without hearing again on the subject. Contrary as was this proceeding to her own feelings, still she could not bring herself to doubt her appearance being welcome, and at length succeeded in reconciling herself entirely to the measure.

She travelled with a lady acquainted with the Bryerlys, and whom, at the entrance of the town, she dropped. It was about the middle of a lovely autumnal day, in the latter end of October, that she reached the end of her journey; the season had not yet despoiled the trees of their leaves, and their variegated hues gave additional richness to the extensive landscape. The residence of Mrs. Stovendale

was situated on one of the steepest of the environing cliffs of Bath; pitying the panting horses as they toiled up the steep ascent leading to it, Fidelia alighted, and thus had a still greater opportunity of gazing on the scenery around her; with inexpressible admiration she contemplated it; so romantic, so picturesque, so singularly contrasted, what it must have been in its original state, ere man, with his works of art, had obtruded amidst the deep solitudes of nature, occurred to her imagination, filling it with images at once grand and awful. But, on catching a glimpse of the residence of Mrs. Stovendale, every other feeling and emotion were lost in eagerness and agitation—that kind of heightened impatience we experience when immediately within sight of any desired point. Quickening her steps, with a hand tremulous from joy she knocked, and had the satisfaction of hearing she was within. Forgetting she was a stranger to the servant who answered, she was directly passing him, when, im-

peding her advance, he begged to know her name.—"Oh, no matter," she replied with quickness, "I am no common visitor;" and, bounding forward as she spoke, she desired to be directly shewn to his mistress. For a moment he hesitated, then leading the way up stairs, he pointed to a half-open door, and Fidelia rushing in, beheld Mrs. Stovendale. She was standing at the moment with her back to the door, giving some directions to her woman about a dress, and on hearing some one enter, started with a look of indescribable surprise at seeing who it was. —"You did not expect me quite so soon, I believe, dear madam?" said Fidelia, struck by this look as she raised her hand to her lips.

"Why, not—not quite so soon," returned Mrs. Stovendale, a little hesitating, as she kissed her cheek; "but pleasure, you know," she added with a smile, but a forced one, "is always heightened by being unexpected. But you did not receive my letter then?"

Fidelia now started in her turn.—" No, madam," in a tone of alarm, she replied. " But is it of any material consequence my not having done so?" and she instantly proceeded to mention the circumstance to which her unexpected, as it now evidently was to her, arrival was owing.

" Why should you suppose so?" said Mrs. Stovendale, evasively; " so come," again kissing her—" don't look so disconsolate." But, as she spoke, her lip quivered, and tears gushing from her at the mournful recollections the meeting revived, proclaimed her but ill qualified at the moment to offer comfort to any one.

In this natural and involuntary tribute to the departed, Fidelia sincerely joined.

When each were a little recovered—" But come, you that are such an admirer of the beautiful and sublime—that gaze with such an emphasis of interest on the lovely in nature—are you not delighted with the situation of my cottage?" said Mrs. Stovendale, rising as she spoke, and touching a spring-blind, which, as it flew

up, disclosed to the enchanted eyes of Fidelia a deep valley, clothed with the finest verdure, and diversified with trees of various size and hue, with a translucent stream flowing through it, alternately straying in wild eddies amongst the copses, or tumbling down natural steps of moss-tinted rock; while, here and there, blue tints of smoke, rising high above the intercepting foliage, betrayed the sequestered hut of a peasant; and farther up, through the fading woods of the opposing heights, the burnished casements of statelier mansions were seen flaring in the full radiance of the setting sun.

"Delighted!" repeated Fidelia—"I am indeed;" and she was proceeding to expatiate on the scene, when she overheard Mrs. Stovendale telling the servant, she need not mind doing any thing then to the dress she had been directing her about, as she should not now want it that day.

"Oh, I fear," involuntarily exclaimed Fidelia, as, on hearing this, she advanced from the window, "that, in some way or

other, my arrival has disconcerted some arrangement?"

"Pho! pho! I must have none of these idle surmises," said Mrs. Stovendale, as she hastily folded up a billet she had been writing, and which having directed, she desired might be taken directly; and also that, if the cook had not already gone out, she must be told she must put off the holiday she had given her to another day, as she now wanted her for this.

"Oh, I am sure I am right," cried Fidelia, on hearing these orders, again bursting into tears—"yes, I see I have broken in upon some engagement."

Her pride, her delicacy, were alarmed; to be considered as an intruder where she had expected to have found a home, was insupportable. Yet certainly there was every appearance of this being the case: a letter had been written, which, from what had now occurred, she could not avoid thinking had been to put her off; her arrival had assuredly disconcerted some arrangement; and the warm, the

affectionate welcome which her heart had panted to receive, and glowed in anticipating, she had not received. Was she then destined for ever to be disappointed, for ever to find herself the sport of fortune —driven from place to place, without any certainty of protection or shelter in any? Her tears redoubled at the thought, and despairingly she raised her streaming eyes to heaven, almost to wish that the only certain resting-place of the wretched might soon be hers.

But not long was she suffered to endure this agony: Mrs. Stovendale no sooner perceived it, which some further directions she was compelled to give to her attendant did not permit her immediately to do, than she exerted herself to subdue it; she caressed her with tenderness, and, as she wiped away her tears, gently reproached her for the doubts they intimated of her regard.

Oh no, she did—did not doubt, Fidelia eagerly replied; she only thought something had perhaps occurred to render her

being then with her inconvenient; adding, with eyes declined, and in a low murmuring tone—" But remember, dearest madam, how soon the tears of a dependant are made to flow!"

" I will not suffer you to call yourself one," said Mrs. Stovendale; " neither," with assumed gaiety, " will I have any more April showers this day."

" Well, madam," half sighing, " those that have fallen shall, if possible, be succeeded by sunshine," replied Fidelia; and, trying to recover her spirits, she proceeded to ask for more exact particulars of the recent occurrences at Rock Fort than Mrs. Stovendale had yet given her, concluding by demanding when she should see her dear Albina, whom, she confessed, she was rather surprised at not finding under her roof.

From the connexion with the Fitzossory family, it was deemed more decorous at present, Mrs. Stovendale returned, for her to be with lady De Bellemont, and to which she was still further induced by Miss Clin-

ton being also at this time the guest of her ladyship—" Nor have I even Hastings with me," she added; " to oblige captain Dundonald, he has taken up his abode with him, at the hotel where he lodges."

" But when may I expect to see Albina?" again demanded Fidelia. " After so often grieving with her, oh, how do I long to rejoice!"

" Oh, soon, to be sure," returned Mrs. Stovendale; and then immediately, as if to prevent any further questions on the subject, started a new one. Fidelia was struck by the circumstance, and, considering it a strange one, could not forbear musing on it.

Amongst the inquiries she made, or rather wished to make, her heart more than once suggested one relative to Grandison; but indescribable feelings, a certain consciousness, made her check the impulse; she felt she feared she could not yield to it, without betraying a stronger interest for him than she wished to have suspected,

ignorant as she was whether she still occupied or not a place in his thoughts.

Dinner was soon served, and soon after, the evening being delightfully fine, Mrs. Stovendale proposed, as she did not appear fatigued, a walk, saying, enthusiast as she was, she would take her one she was sure would afford her pleasure, namely, to the scene of Tom Jones. Ardent and romantic, exquisitely alive to the magic charm imparted by fiction or tradition to any scene, the heart of Fidelia bounded at the proposal; and, hastily equipping herself, sallied forth, with all the eagerness of a sanguine imagination, in quest of what is gratifying to it.

After proceeding a little way, they turned into the long avenue of Prior Park. Led by the novelist's enchanting description to form romantic notions of this celebrated place, Fidelia was disappointed to find herself confined to this avenue; the images that accompanied her, however, to it, rendered any view of it

interesting. Forgetting, in the ardour of her imagination, that all she was dwelling on was imaginary—"This was probably the promenade of poor Jones," she said; "here he often perhaps secretly bewailed the orphan state, that exposed him to such malignity and machinations, and often, beneath the shadow of these tall trees, sighed forth the name of his Sophia, deploring the luckless destiny that seemed to deprive him of all hope of ever possessing such worth and beauty."

"And here," observed Mrs. Stovendale, drawing her towards the other side, where a low bank, unlike the opposite one, that, with a line of tall straight trees, rose steep above the path, allowed a view beneath—"amidst this diversified scenery we may suppose it was that the good, the pious and benevolent Allworthy was in the habit of walking forth to inhale the pure breath of morn, and contemplate the beauties of creation."

"What a noble character!" said Fidelia; "and how still more interesting, from the

knowledge of its not being an imaginary one—that, in its distinguished original, Allen, there was every virtue and quality we admire in it!"

"From all I have gathered of him, I understand so," said Mrs. Stovendale; "and while his virtues delight us, his story should humble the arrogance of birth, by the proof it affords, that a name may be ennobled and distinguished without an illustrious descent;" then proceeding to relate some particulars of him which Fidelia did not before know.

Fidelia now inquired who the present occupant of the mansion was; but on this head Mrs. Stovendale could not satisfy her, only saying, she understood it had had different masters since his decease.

"Well, I wonder," said Fidelia, pausing at the gate that affords a view of it, "some person of taste and genius does not take it."

Mrs. Stovendale laughed.—"Why, my dear girl," she said, "you forget that what renders it interesting to you was but imaginary."

"No, I will not believe so," returned Fidelia; "as there was an original for one of the characters, why may we not suppose there were so for others? The story, too, is not by any means improbable; and, in short, when one interests me, I like to think it a real one, or rather that the characters that constitute its charm lived, and moved, and had their being; that, through this very gate against which I am now leaning, Jones cast what he conceived a farewell look at the home of his infancy; and that it was here his fond and undeceived uncle welcomed him back, to be its future possessor. I have often thought," she added, "that we are indebted to the writers of fiction, so delightfully do works of fancy abstract us often from painful thoughts."

"They certainly very agreeably unbend the mind," returned Mrs. Stovendale—"often conveying, too, good lessons. The only danger is, in representing ideal scenes, their giving us a distaste to the tamer and less high-coloured ones of real life."

"That can scarcely ever be the case, I think," said Fidelia, "except made the sole study. One might almost as much fear, I think, that the wild and glowing efforts of a Salvator or Claude Lorraine's pencil would give one a dislike to a plain unembellished residence. I think it very possible to have the fancy elevated without the feelings being perverted."

"Assuredly," assented Mrs. Stovendale; "and I certainly conceive the exclamations we often hear against works of fancy extremely commonplace and ridiculous."

Having gratified her curiosity in some degree by a partial view of Prior Park, Mrs. Stovendale conducted her fair companion to take one of the supposed residence of squire Western—a handsome old mansion, with a court before it. Here again Fidelia paused, and, once more yielding to fancy, felt much pleasure in contemplating what she conceived might have been the chamber where the amiable and suffering Sophia was confined, the gate by which she effected her escape, and

the neat old church, at the opposite side of the road, half mantled with ivy, where the display of her present had excited such envy and confusion; in short, every thing here was so identified by description, that, from the existence of the places represented in the work, Fidelia was again inclined to believe in that of the characters.—"But the race to which squire Western belonged is, I understand," she added, "totally extinct—that in vain we should now look for the downright country foxhunter, devoted to nothing but his stables and kennel."

"Society is certainly much altered since the days that Fielding wrote," returned Mrs. Stovendale.

"And improved, do you think?" demanded Fidelia.

Mrs. Stovendale smiled.—"As to that," said she, "I must be cautious what I say on that subject; for one of the first symptoms of declining youth, they say, is to rail, Nestor-like, against the preceding times."

"Well, as far as I can judge," returned Fidelia, "from what I have read of former manners, from those who speak of them, such as Richardson, Fielding, and Smollet, I think not. The strong family affection, the identifying regard, which they so delightfully describe, and on which the mind dwells with such pleasure, would now perhaps be difficult to meet with."

"Manners are certainly become infinitely more artificial; and in proportion as they do, it requires no argument to prove the feelings become less natural. Fashion now bears absolute sway, and the selfishness she engenders ever leads to coldness and repulsion."

"How astonishing the idolatry paid to her! But certainly it must be gratifying to the pride of our sex to think that man, lordly man, worships as obsequiously at her shrine as ever we did—the dandies to wit, that non-descript race, disclaimed by one sex and laughed at by the other."

"Come, come, you must beware what

you say here, in the very court of fashion; there are pens and gall here, I assure you, as well as elsewhere."

"Oh! at the satire of the avowed satirist I should only laugh," said Fidelia. "I must be convinced that keen sense and humour impelled the pen, ere its efforts could pain me."

They continued straying about till the dusky mantle of advancing night began to veil the scenery. In their way back, Fidelia was struck by the picturesque effect produced by the lights on the opposite amphitheatre of hills, at first dimly seen, like stars emerging from turbid and chaotic clouds, then extending in brilliant lines, like wreaths of light upon the brow of the mountains.

Scarcely were they reseated in the drawroom, when a loud double knock was heard. The heart of Fidelia fluttered: oh! it might be Albina, that, hearing of her arrival, had come to see her. But the door opened for a very different being—an old lady, of the

name of Clackit, who, from the familiarity of her manner, evidently proved herself well acquainted with Mrs. Stovendale, as were indeed several others now at Bath. She entered eagerly, and almost pantingly expressed her pleasure at finding Mrs. Stovendale at home—"For, to be sure, at this festive time," she said, "I scarcely thought I should; but still would not pass without calling, as I was going on, with something like an intention of spending a tiresome evening with your tetotum neighbour, Mrs. Fidget. Poor dear woman! it would be well for her, or at least for those obliged to be with her, if the gout never left her great toe, for she must then perforce be a little stationary. Mr. Heavisides protests to me I am entitled to twenty thousand pounds, for that in her I have discovered the perpetual motion.—But is this the fair bride-elect? No, I see not, now that I have thrown off my mufflings. Well, Miss, I shan't ask pardon for the mistake, for no one need be offended to be taken for Miss Albina Dundonald, she being, as our

beaux say here, a perfect constellation of charms. Upon my word, my dear Mrs. Stovendale, your son will be quite the envy of the world when he possesses her. —But have you heard the news? All Bath is in an uproar—That libertine At-all, notwithstanding the charming wife he has himself—not over-beautiful, to be sure, but then possessed of every estimable quality; and what's the tincture of a skin to real worth?—she comes indeed of a pure stock. A wit nicknamed her family *the monsters*, because, he said, they were faultless. Well, he took it into his intriguing head, I say, to write a *billet-doux* to Mrs. Chopwell, the admired rib of a gentleman in the mangling line, as Quaintly says, in this place, entreating a meeting, the ensuing evening, on the North Parade,

'When twilight grey
Had in her sober mantle all things clad.'

Well, like a discreet matron (but indeed she has been excellently well trained, I am told—brought up under the immedi-

ate care and protection of the honourable Mrs. Blaze, one of the greatest promoters of Sunday schools, as every one knows, in the three kingdoms)—well, she, I say, shewed it to her *caro*, as, to be sure, in duty bound; and when he had a little recovered from the passion it threw him into —a passion that made him make the very cleavers tremble, he insisted on her keeping the appointment: accordingly she went, and found her *inamorato* impatiently awaiting her. They had not long conversed, when a slight scream escaped the lady: this was the signal for the husband, who had cautiously followed, to advance; he flew forward to the rescue of his Lucretia, and producing a cudgel, laid it on the shoulders of the offending party, till absolute fatigue made him desist. Atall, they say, is absolutely beaten black and blue—pounded fit for a sausage."

"Well, it's to be hoped he'll profit by the chastisement he has met with."

"Oh, as to that, my dear creature, his case is quite as hopeless as Mrs. Rigid's

rheumatism; he does not belong to a reforming family; and, as a friend of mine used to observe, at the other side of the herring brook (by-the-bye, she was sister to the late bishop of ———, though her expressions were not always what the Chesterfield school would approve of),—'One can't expect blood out of a turnip:' his father was a perfect Lovelace; and as to his uncle, I dare say you heard of the kick-up he made here some years ago, by running away with a little Connaught heiress, who was sent over to get rid of her brogue. There was a Miss Tomkins settled here about that time; she was called *Jack* Tomkins, from the part she took in that affair. I heard her whole story from Mr. Sneerwell: he introduced her in one of his satirical novels. Admirable works his! you could not mistake one of the likenesses—sometimes a little caricatured, to be sure, but then only the more amusing. Poor Mrs. Dawdle! I shall never forget the fright she was in when she discovered who he was (for by

chance they lodged together in the same boarding-house), lest he should, as she said, have put her in print; but, the dear soul! her insipidity protected her—a mere composition of chalk and water; one of the elements, Sneerwell used to say, namely, fire, was certainly forgotten—not a point about her that could be caught at."

Here the door was again thrown open, and a lady of the name of Rookby was announced—a tall, stiff, precise-looking being, with an indescribable air, if the expression be admissible, of smirking formality about her. She was an intimate of Mrs. Clackit's, and scarcely gave herself time to pay her compliments to Mrs. Stovendale, ere she turned to commence an attack on her, accusing her of rudeness, and, in short, by what she said, betraying that they had made an appointment that evening to go out in quest of amusement, which, from the impatience of Mrs. Clackit to start for the game, she had broken.—"I really waited for you till my patience was quite exhausted; and then had such

a search after you—it was by mere chance I discovered you were here. Upon my word, my dear ma'am, if you give way to these fits of forgetfulness, one must get a flapper to be at your elbow."

To this observation, however, no reply was made; Mrs. Clackit had just commenced her tea, and was too much engaged at the moment not to allow her tongue a little respite.

Finding she could not irritate her, as she good-naturedly wished, she turned to Mrs. Stovendale, to inquire whether she had heard the news—"But the question is unnecessary," she added, with a disdainful smile at Mrs. Clackit, "for every one knows that Mrs. Clackit is a first-rate publisher."

"What news?" rather coolly inquired Mrs. Stovendale.

"Oh! about that wretch Atall: they positively say that the injured husband means to sue for a divorce."

"Well, that's a good one!" said Mrs. Clackit, laying down her cup to indulge

in a fit of laughter—" why, he has brought his action of damages already! How, in the name of common sense, child, could he think of applying for any thing of the kind, unable as he is to allege any thing against his wife?"

" Well, if surprising her with a gallant is not having something to allege against her, I don't know what is."

" There you are quite wrong: it was by his express desire she kept the appointment. I had it from the most undoubted authority."

" I don't know whom you may have had your information from, but I place equal reliance on mine, and I am confidently assured——"

" Nay, I am sure it's of little consequence who is right," interrupted Mrs. Stovendale. " Pardon me, but the less such affairs are discussed, the better." Then, in order to change a subject disagreeable to her, she proceeded to ask Mrs. Rookby about a friend of hers, who had lately returned to Bath.

"Miss Felton! oh yes, charming woman, I have been to see her, but she has not yet called upon me. But the up-and-down streets of Bath are now beginning to get too fatiguing for her."

"Why, is her health bad? I never knew that before."

"Oh no—not her health; but, about twenty years ago, I am told she was an excellent walker."

"Oh, now I understand you," said Mrs. Stovendale. "Well, really, for a person advanced, as you insinuate, she has a very youthful look."

"Oh, my dear ma'am, if you were to see her sometimes of a morning, as I do! —for she has no ceremony with a friend like me. But really she makes herself up amazingly well; but, *entre nous*—this is between ourselves—she can't endure the idea of having it supposed she has turned the corner, and not for the world would I breathe a word that could be the means of hurting her feelings, amiable creature! There are people who say she doesn't study

her looks for nothing—that she has it in contemplation, should lady W—— obligingly pop off, to supply her place to lord W——; but, for my part, I don't believe the scandalous insinuation. Her regard for him is certainly very great, very extraordinary; that is—I mean it would be extraordinary, but that it can be accounted for by their being so much together. No, no, in spite of appearances, I always lean to the side of candour."

"In her mother's state of health, she must be happy to have her at home?"

"Oh, my dear ma'am, the very reverse: with her sails always full set, she throws every thing into such a state of confusion—so worrits and fidgets the poor old woman!"

"The family are altogether amiable, I have been informed," again observed Mrs. Stovendale.

"Yes—at least if you'll believe themselves. They are certainly the greatest egotists, the greatest puffers in the world, continually trying to set themselves up

above every one else: the most trivial thing done by any one of them is extolled by all the rest as something superlative; even the old lady, if she can get no one else to praise her, praises herself. But still they are a charming family, one I have the sincerest regard for."

"Why, if it's true what one hears, so you should," said Mrs. Clackit.

"True what one hears!—really, ma'am, I don't know what you mean. My attachment to them is quite disinterested, if the truth were known—But, however, the less said on that subject, the better. They would promise you the moon, to be sure, if, like the child in the story-book, you cried for it; but, as to performing, that's a different thing."

"Well, I hate every one of the Fudge family, to which I conceive every one belonging," said Mrs. Clackit, "who makes professions without meaning; like Mr. C——, always asking you to dinner when sure you're engaged elsewhere; and, when once he has seen you fairly outside the

house, gently reproaching you for unkindness in not stopping for refreshment; when, had you remained till Doomsday, even a glass of his sour wine would not have been produced."

In this way the ladies kept up the ball, to the total exclusion of all rational conversation, hacking and hewing their acquaintance, and bringing forward foibles and defects that, but for them, might never have been known. At length they rose to depart. Mrs. Clackit had left her muffling in another room; while putting them on there—"Heavens! what a tiresome being!" observed Mrs. Rookby, in an under tone, "with her fatiguing and eternal digressions! Her stories really, like the story of the king of Bohemia and his seven castles in Tristram Shandy, seem destined never to have an end." Here the other reappearing, she, in her turn, stepped into the adjoining room, to make herself up.

With a stifled laugh—"What a piece of ridiculous affectation!" immediately be-

gan Mrs. Clackit. "I tried to give her the slip this evening, certain that, let me go where I would, her absence would be more welcome than her company; but she sticks to one like a leech; indeed there's no chance of her getting into company but through another person, there's so much rude malice and ill-nature in all she says and does."

She might have proceeded in her eulogium, had not Mrs. Rookby's rejoining her at the instant prevented her; and they both departed, arm-in-arm, and, to all appearance, the best and most attached friends in the world.

"Well, what do you think of our visitors?" was Mrs. Stovendale's demand, as they departed.

"Why, as sir Peter Teazle says, they certainly have left their character behind them. But we won't imitate them by dwelling on it; let it suffice. I should not much like the world, if I thought there were many in it that resembled them. But, while we feel disgust, we

cannot help laughing," continued Fidelia, "so ludicrous is it to hear Mrs. Rookby at once praising and dispraising the same person, thus putting one in mind of the man in the fable doing two things in the same breath."

"By intermingling praise and censure, she has the shallowness to think she veils her own propensity to ill-nature, forgetting that satirical remarks are never so odious as when proceeding out of the mouth of a pretended friend."

"I almost wonder she and her friend Mrs. Clackit, as I suppose I must denominate that lady, gain admission any where."

"Oh, as to that, if we were to exclude all but those who come up to our standard of amiability, I believe we should have but a limited society; it would, besides, be too presumptuous in us to attempt arrogating to ourselves such superiority. There's an advantage, too, to be derived from seeing and mingling with different characters, the remarks they elicit often serving as useful hints to ourselves."

Fidelia would now gladly have reverted to other matters; there were many questions she wished to ask respecting Albina —when her marriage was to take place, and where it was probable her residence would be fixed: with regard to the latter, self had a little share in her solicitude; for that the home of Albina would not be hers, she could not doubt. By some means or other, however, she was prevented; and, with a sensation of uneasiness at the circumstance, she at length retired for the night; yet not to design could she impute it; and accordingly rose, the next morning, with renovated spirits.

END OF VOL. III.

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